The Limits of Modernisation

Religious and Gender Inequality in Northern Ireland

Rosemary Ann Sales

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Abstract

This work focuses on the role of state policy and multinational capital in the reproduction of social divisions in Northern Ireland. It concentrates on the period since 1972, when Direct Rule from Westminster replaced the Stormont regime.

While the Unionist state has been abolished, sectarianism continues to dominate economic, political and social life. Although some reforms have been introduced, British policy has been unable to attack the roots of sectarianism. Multinational companies play no straight forward 'modernising' role in relation to sectarian (or gender) divisions. The evidence presented suggests that foreign capital has both undermined and reproduced existing social divisions. Sectarian practices have changed in response to political pressure, rather than any inherent tendency in capital itself.

The political importance of the sectarian divide has overshadowed interest in gender inequalities. The two issues have remained separate in academic literature and in policy. This thesis has brought the two together, both theoretically and in the empirical work. It is argued that gender has been a crucial element in the construction of sectarian divisions, while sectarianism helps sustain patriarchal structures. Sectarianism has compounded gender disadvantage for Catholic women.

The early chapters concern the theoretical framework, and the historical background to the period of Direct Rule. These are based largely on published sources, integrating material on both sectarian and gender inequalities. The later chapters review the evidence of the impact of British state policy on these inequalities. These are based mainly on official data; on published and unpublished material from the Fair Employment Commission's monitoring returns of individual companies and public authorities, and on a small number of interviews. These sources are supplemented with a small-scale study of employment at the Royal Victoria Hospital, based largely on interviews with staff and management.

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Corrections

p 27 Footnote 7. Replace second sentence with: "Following a ruling by the European Court in 1981, the legislation on homosexuality was brought into line with British law."

p 32 Second paragraph, second sentence should read: "They were made to feel inferior, and to make matters worse they often *were* inferior, if *only* in those personal qualities that make for success in competitive economic life."

p 43 First sentence should begin: "In Northern Ireland, Catholics are lazy, unreliable and disloyal"

p 46 Third paragraph: Amsden 1982 should read Amsden 1980

p 96 Last sentence should read: "Net emigration, the product of underdevelopment, has - apart from a short period during the 1980s - remained a permanent feature."

p 138 Paragraph 2 line 1, second sentence should begin: "Areas formerly under the control..."

p 169 Note 6, last sentence should end: "...(Irish News, 28th March 1992)."

p 199 Note 4. Quotation should begin: "Although I have not achieved my goal of becoming Chief Constable..."

p 211 Table 6.8. Bottom line: % of Protestant women in work should read **61.1**

p 227 Paragraph 3. All after the first sentence (from "In a cautious conclusion..") should be deleted.

Introduction

Northern Ireland - A Divided Society

The divisions in Northern Ireland between Protestant and Catholic reach into every area of life - social, political, economic. Religious identity generally determines where people live, and almost certainly where they go to school. It affects the likelihood of getting a job, and where and at what they work. It will determine who their friends are and whom they marry; where they drink, the sports they play and the songs they sing (Murray, 1985; Darby, 1983; Howe, 1990). Above all, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it determines political allegiance, and where people stand on the major divides in Northern Ireland politics: the question of power sharing within Northern Ireland, and more fundamentally, the British connection and the border. The divide goes so deep that a large minority of people (almost exclusively Catholics) reject the very existence of the state in which they live, while for most Protestants, the maintenance of 'their' state is the most important political priority.

To the observer from outside Northern Ireland, these divisions may not be immediately apparent. It takes experience to be able to detect whether a person is Protestant or Catholic: they look more or less the same; they speak the same language;[1] they share much popular culture, watch the same television programmes. In their segregated schools, they will follow the same National Curriculum.[2] And the Protestant and Catholic ghettoes which house the urban working class may appear equally bleak and run down.

But segregation is more all-embracing than that between apparently more dissimilar groups in Britain. Many Catholics grow up without any social contact with a Protestant (Murray 1985); some Catholics living on the Falls Road will never venture onto the Protestant Shankill, just a few hundred yards away.

These divisions do not represent merely *difference* but *inequality*. For the first fifty years of Northern Ireland's existence, Protestants - through the Unionist Party - held almost unchallenged political power. Control of the local state apparatus was used ruthlessly to maintain and reinforce the relative economic advantage of the Protestant population, and to exclude Catholics. At the same time, large-scale industry was owned almost exclusively by Protestants, while the distribution of agricultural land was disproportionately favourable to Protestant farmers (Crotty, 1986). Discrimination in employment was institutionalised in both public and private sectors. The marginalised economic and social position of Catholics meant that their living standards were lower, and they had less access to employment opportunities, even in the absence of direct discrimination.

In 1972, the British government imposed Direct Rule from Westminster on Northern Ireland as a response to a growing political crisis. The old Unionist-dominated Stormont parliament was abolished, and reforms were enacted in the law governing local elections which had perpetuated Unionist control of all but a handful of local authorities. The system of 'gerrymandering' of electoral boundaries under which a minority of Unionist voters had been able to outvote the majority was ended.[3] The property qualification for voters was abolished, instituting for the first time 'one person, one vote' in local elections. Official policies aimed at combatting religious and gender discrimination were developed, including both the removal from local control of public services (for example the creation of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive), and the establishment of the Fair Employment Agency (later the Fair Employment Commission) and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

A further development was the growing involvement of multinational capital from the late 1950s. Many commentators have argued that foreign capital has no interest in what they consider to be archaic divisions in Northern Ireland, since these firms are motivated purely by the search for profits. Multinationals are thus a 'modernising' force whose expansion would tend to undermine differences between Protestant and Catholic, as they seek out the cheapest labour and most efficient production processes (Farrell, 1980; Probert, 1978).[4]

This optimistic view of the possibilities for eliminating discrimination has not gone unchallenged. O'Dowd and his co-authors (1981) have argued that sectarianism is so deeply embedded in the structures of Northern Ireland that even the ending of direct

discrimination, and the apparently impartial attitudes of foreign capital will not overcome these divisions.

The past 20 years have seen major restructuring in the labour market, partly as a result of these developments. But the evidence suggests that there has been no simple process of narrowing of differences. The consistency of the unemployment differential - Catholics are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants - points to continuing inequalities.

The focus of this work is on the way in which these political and economic changes have affected social divisions in Northern Ireland, and in particular divisions within the labour market. It will examine how far British state policy and the penetration of foreign capital have tended to undermine, or alternatively to reinforce, these divisions.

Economists have not generally concerned themselves with these questions (Harris, 1990; Canning et al, 1987). The methodology of conventional economics takes the political status quo for granted. The peculiarities of the Northern Ireland state, and the differences between the job markets for Protestants and Catholics, if addressed at all, are taken as 'given', and belonging outside the realm of economics. The impact of the 'Troubles' on the economy is also taken as an external factor, to be costed and allotted its share of lost jobs. But the origins of these 'Troubles' in the political and economic structures of Northern Ireland are not seen as within the scope of economic analysis.

Others have accounted for divisions between Protestant and Catholic, and for differences in the development of North and South, by the 'Protestant work ethic', and the existence of more 'personal initiative' within the Protestant community.[5] This idea also underlies much of the writing of the British and Irish Communist Organisation,[6] whose particular brand of Marxism led them to argue that there are two nations in Ireland, a progressive Protestant nation and a reactionary Catholic nation.

The question of the root of these divisions lies at the heart of the debate around imperialism in Ireland. This has divided into two antagonistic camps writers who claim to take their inspiration and analysis from the works of Marx.

Commentators on both sides of the debate would agree that the relatively high level of industrial development in the North East, and the different positions of Protestants and Catholics in that industrialisation process, were the foundations of Unionist resistance

to independence, and thus of partition. They disagree, however, on two crucial questions: the extent to which partition reflected, and continues to reflect, Britain's own interests; and the possibilities for democratic reform in Northern Ireland.

While the two strands of thinking are by no means homogeneous, those within each group broadly agree on their attitude to these questions. Thus the labels *anti-imperialist* and *revisionist* (Martin, 1982) have often been used to distinguish them.

Debates on Ireland continue to be dominated by these issues. *Anti-imperialists* argue that Britain's imperial interest in continued dominance of Ireland was the major reason why it handed over power to the Unionists in Northern Ireland. On this reading, Northern Ireland is inherently undemocratic, and Unionist domination is the *raison d'etre* for the state. British policy, therefore, whatever its claimed reformist stance, would play a crucial role in reinforcing sectarianism. Sectarian divisions are also seen as important in maintaining Northern Ireland as a source of cheap labour. The national question thus remains a major issue for socialists.

The *revisionists* argue that partition was largely a result of internal divisions in Ireland, and that Britain's interest was secondary. They claim that imperialism no longer dominates Ireland, and that the real struggle is that of workers against capitalist (domestic and foreign). Socialists should therefore attempt to unite the working class - Protestant and Catholic - in pursuit of class interests. The national question is seen as a dangerous diversion from this strategy.

These debates have their roots in differences over the relationship between socialism and nationalism which go back over a century. Marx left a contradictory legacy in his own writing on this question, and the problem has continued to divide Marxists. But nationalism is

> ***"the driving force behind revolutionary advances in Central America and the cause of socialist dissension in south-east Asia. It has underlain many victories for socialism - from Vietnam to Cuba - and many other retreats from socialism - from the USSR to Algeria" (Munck, 1986, p1).***

A related division is on the question of underdevelopment, where Marxists have had similar difficulties in developing an analysis capable of comprehending the specific processes of accumulation in what is variously called the 'Third World', the 'periphery' the 'semi-industrialised countries' (Palma, 1978).

While Marxists have engaged in vigorous debate on the origins of national divisions in Ireland, much less has been written on gender and still less on the connection between the two. The limited attention given to this question both by Marx himself, and in the classic Marxist texts, is reflected in the marginalisation of writing on gender issues from mainstream debates on imperialism and nationalism. This is true both generally, and specifically in relation to Ireland, where very little work has been attempted on integrating the study of gender inequalities with those of nation and class. This indifference to questions of gender is of course even more apparent in mainstream economic theory, with its preoccupation with the (genderless) individual and the market (Waylen, 1986).

The conflation of national (or ethnic) identity in Northern Ireland with religious affiliation makes this omission particularly glaring. The extreme conservatism of both the major religious denominations, particularly on questions of the family and sexuality, suggests in itself the importance of the gender dimension to an understanding of national divisions. Opposition to abortion and gay rights has been one of the few areas on which politicians and clergy from both sides can agree. These views have been allowed to prevail in relation to state policy which continues to lag behind British policy on these issues.[7]

The dominance of the Churches' views on the family plays a central role in cementing the political alliances based on religious affiliation, and this issue is therefore crucial to an understanding of Northern Ireland society. This patriarchal culture however also points to reasons why both sides in the debate (ie those emphasising class or nation) have preferred to ignore issues of women's oppression.

Discussion of labour market discrimination between Catholic and Protestant focuses almost exclusively on male workers, and more specifically on the male unemployment differential.[8] At the same time discussion of equal opportunities for women largely ignores the religious aspect, on the assumption, often implicit, that Catholic women are disadvantaged mainly as women rather than by their religion (see for example Osborne & Cormack, 1987). This is institutionalised in the separation of the Fair Employment Commission, which is concerned with religious discrimination, and the Equal Opportunities Commission, which is concerned with gender inequality. The political priority given to religion in current state policy is demonstrated by the far greater powers available to the FEC (discussed below, Chapter Five); its larger budget;[9] and a

higher maximum level of award (£30,000) for religious discrimination than for sex discrimination (£10,000).

The separation of the issues of religious and gender divisions which pervades the academic literature and social policy imposes severe limitations on our understanding of both of these issues. Economic restructuring for example has been a complex process in which jobs have been reconstructed both on a religious and gender basis (for example the substitution of 'Catholic female' by 'Protestant male' jobs).[10] The processes which have reproduced sectarian divisions have also reproduced gender divisions.

It will be argued below that employment is structured by both gender and religion together. This means for example that Catholic women have a specific relation to the labour market which is not merely a result of their sex, nor even of a summation of sexual and religious oppression. It results from their position in a society which is not only structured by class, but is based on patriarchal dominance and the institutional power of one religious group.

Marxism and Ireland

Political divisions in Northern Ireland, reflected for example in support for political parties, concern the role, structure, and indeed continued existence of the Northern Ireland state. These differences cut across class and gender, marginalising those parties which have called for a class-based politics that ignores this divide, as well as those non-socialist groupings of an avowedly non-sectarian nature.[11] Irish Marxism itself is split into two camps which reflect the allegiances of each within the overall divide in Northern Irish society. Morgan (1980, p188) refers to the two camps as *Green socialists* and *Orange socialists*.

For marxists, concerned with the political and economic emancipation of the working class, this appears a dismal prospect. Some British observers are impatient with what they see as Irish preoccupation with reactionary ideas. Appeals are made for a pure class politics which ignores what are seen as bourgeois nationalist concerns.[12]

That such widely differing views on nationalism can be held by those claiming to be true to Marx's own work arises partly from the fact that

> *"there was no 'scientific revolution' in this area comparable to that brought about by Marx in the critique of political economy" (Munck, op cit, p9).*

It reflects a more general weakness in Marxist analysis of social divisions other than class, including those of gender and ethnicity (Anthias & Yuval Davis, 1983).

The divide in Irish Marxism encompasses differences about the possibilities for building working class unity within the boundaries of the Northern Ireland state, which immediately raises the question of the British connection. This leads to fundamentally opposed theoretical and political conclusions about the progressiveness of current political struggles. The role of British state policy in reproducing divisions within the working class - the focus of the current work - is thus central to this controversy.

It is appropriate to begin the discussion with the *anti-imperialist/revisionist* debate. A brief outline of the work of Marx and Engels on Ireland will be followed by a review of the two schools of thought which claim to follow in the same tradition .

Marx and Engels on Ireland

The approach of Marx and Engels to the Irish question marked a decisive break with the schema that had dominated their writing on nationalism in the 1840s and 1850s: the Hegelian notion of 'historic' and 'non-historic' nations (Munck, op cit, pp9-15). This led them to dismiss the rights of small nations as 'counter-revolutionary', and to support imperial conquest as a means of bringing progress to 'barbaric' societies. Engels wrote of

> *"These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled under foot in the course of history ... these residual fragments of peoples always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation..." (Marx & Engels, 1977, p234)*

Marx characterised the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' as one where private property in land is absent. Such societies he argued would be static, lacking internal mechanisms for change. Therefore "Indian society has no history at all" (cited in Avinieri, 1976) and progress could come only from without, by the forcible breaking down of archaic structures. This conception has been criticised for its Eurocentricity (ibid, p238). A

mode of production described in geographic terms also sits uncomfortably with the claims of Marxism to be universal theory of history (ibid, p255).

Marx wrote a series of articles for the New York Daily Tribune during the 1850s in which, while condemning in the sharpest terms the brutalities of British rule, he refused to support what he considered to be the backward-looking Indian Mutiny of 1857. His analysis of India nevertheless reflected a development from the sweeping certainties of the 'historic' nation, towards a more complex view of the relation between nationalism and social development. He argued that British colonialism had a two-fold impact on India, both destructive and progressive, which while bringing untold misery, also laid down the conditions for capitalist development (Palma Dutt, 1940). But, he argued, India would only gain the benefit of this process when she had thrown off colonialism.

It was in relation to Ireland that the distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed and the oppressor nation replaced that between the 'historic' and the 'non-historic' nation for Marx and Engels. They stood unambiguously for Irish independence, both in their writing and their political campaigning.

Their work on Ireland, covered a period of nearly fifty years from 1843 to 1892.[13] While both undertook research on Irish history, often using original sources, neither produced an extended analysis of the Irish question. Their writings are mainly fragments, much of the material in the form of letters and newspaper articles. They are refer to Ireland in some of their major works (for example, Marx's *Capital*).

Their ideas about the desirability of Irish independence changed dramatically over this period. In 1845, Engels wrote that repeal of the Union could "not remove Irish distress" (Marx & Engels, 1971, p53). By 1867, Marx wrote that he "previously thought that Ireland's separation from England impossible. Now I think it inevitable" (ibid, p153).

Two themes dominated their later work on Ireland: that Ireland's development has been hampered by British rule; and that the English working class must demand Irish independence in its own interest. They campaigned in Britain for Irish independence, and some of their most clearly stated positions are in resolutions to the First International and the International Working Men's Association (ibid, p417). Engels wrote to Marx in 1870 that:

"Ireland has been stunted in her development by the English invasion and thrown centuries back. And this ever since the 12th century."

He notes however that the early wars of invasion

"did not have the distinctly devastating character they assumed in the sixteenth century, and which afterwards became the rule" (ibid, pp399-400)

He makes clear that this conclusion results from his study of Irish history. Both Marx and Engels wrote in some detail of a number of periods in Irish history which they believed decisive in determining the impact of British Rule - the plantations; the Union and the Famine. Their analysis of these events will be discussed in Chapter Three. The general conclusion they draw from their work is that with the development of capitalism in Britain around the sixteenth century, Ireland became economically subordinated to British capital. British policy limited the development of the productive forces, and impoverished the Irish peasantry. The development of capitalist relations in Ireland, which were established in the nineteenth century and hastened by the Famine was also shaped by British domination. In Capital, Marx wrote of the

"conditions in which ground rent, the mode of landed property corresponding to the capitalist mode of production, has a formal existence even though the capitalist mode of production itself does not exist, the tenant himself is not an industrial capitalist, and his manner of farming is not a capitalist one. This is how it is in Ireland" (Marx, 1976, Vol III, p763).

In the nineteenth century struggles for independence were developing, with mass agitation around land.

"In Ireland, the land question has hitherto been the exclusive form of the social question ... and is at the same time inseparable from the national question" (Marx & Engels, 1971, p407).

For Marx and Engels, this question was also crucial to the success of the British class struggle:

"Ireland is therefore the great means by which the English aristocracy maintains its domination over England herself ... But the overthrow of the English aristocracy in Ireland involves as a necessary consequence its overthrow in England. And this would fulfil the preliminary condition for the proletarian revolution in England" (ibid pp406-7).

For them the interests of the English working class were indissolubly tied to the Irish question.

> *"The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland" (ibid, p398).*

Colonial rule divided the English working class:

> *"The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country and against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself" (ibid, pp407-8).*

It is sometimes argued that Marx's support for Irish independence lay solely in the progressive effect he believed it would have on the British working class (Martin, op cit, p57). Lenin wrote that Marx's support came "not from the standpoint of the interests of 'justice for Ireland' but from the standpoint of the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the oppressor" (Lenin, 1973, p214). The great bulk of Marx and Engels's writing on Ireland, however, concerns the impact of British policy on Ireland. It would seem artificial to make a distinction between these two themes. The demand for Irish independence reflected in their view both the interests of Ireland and of the British working class. This is evident in Marx's statement that Ireland needed

> *1) Self-government and independence from England*
> *2) An agrarian revolution*
> *3) Protective tariffs against England" (Marx & Engels, 1971, p158)*

Lenin's own writing on the subject was much more abstract, and based on no original study of Irish history. He used Ireland as an example in a polemic against Rosa Luxemburg on the right of nations to self-determination (Lenin, 1963, Vol I). This rather one-sided view of Marx's argument therefore stems from the different context in Lenin wrote.

A major omission in the work of Marx and Engels is any analysis of the causes and consequences of the separate path of development taken by the North Eastern counties of Ireland from the nineteenth century, and in particular of the support given to the English connection by the Protestant working class. Although they mention Cromwell's Plantation of Ulster, there is little discussion of what this settler population would mean

for social development in Ireland. The importance of this question had not developed to the level it was to reach by the end of the century. Nevertheless, following the Act of Union, Ulster had embarked on a process of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation which was already significant by the middle of the century, as were the sectarian character of the work practices.

Marx and Engels' work on Ireland cannot be taken as giving unambiguous support for the current campaign for Irish unity.[14] While some see this as merely a continuation of the necessary struggle for self-determination, others have argued that partition represented a settlement of the national question. The failure of Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, adequately to address the issues which culminated in partition has opened the way for a number of contradictory interpretations, all claiming to be faithful to their ideas.

This battle of ideas is echoed in debates about imperialism and underdevelopment in the 'Third World'. While, through their work on Ireland, Marx and Engels came to question the notion that the penetration of capitalism through colonialism was universally progressive, they did not discard the notion of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production'. It is thus possible to argue that support for Irish independence cannot be generalised to other parts of the world, or other times. Bill Warren, one of the leading protagonists in the *revisionist* camp in the Irish debate, also made a major contribution to the debate on underdevelopment in his polemic in defence of capitalist imperialism (Warren, 1980).

In spite of the contradictory elements in his writing on nationalism, Marx, with Engels, had begun the task of developing a "historically determined concept of national oppression" (Munck, op cit p 21). Nationalism was not an abstract question, but one to be judged according to specific historical circumstances, against the criterion of what best promoted the interests of the working class. Nevertheless the Irish work suggests that the balance had shifted from support for 'progressive nations' towards the 'oppressed nation'. Nationalism was never Marx's central concern, since class was the main driving force in his theory of history. But it has probably been at the root of most splits within Marxism, and the gulf in Irish Marxism has so far been unbridgeable.

James Connolly

James Connolly was unquestionably the leading figure in the Irish socialist and trade union movement at the beginning of this century. For Connolly, the importance of the struggle against British rule in Ireland was not the achievement of formal political independence, but of economic independence, and the transformation of society in the interests of the working class. Since Ireland was a colony dominated by British capital, working class struggle inevitably took the form of a struggle against British institutions. Nevertheless:

> *"If you remove the English army tomorrow, and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist Republic, your efforts would be in vain." (Beresford Ellis, 1973, p124)*

The national struggle is not merely a step towards socialism, but must be integrally linked with it. In his famous phrase

> *"The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered." (Beresford Ellis, 1985, p226).*

This view guided Connolly's political life and the manner of his death by a British Army firing squad for his part in the "Easter Rising" of 1916. At his death Connolly was General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, the largest union in Ireland. The Irish Citizen's Army,[15] which he led into Easter Rising was the embodiment of the fusion of the workers' struggle with the national struggle.

While Connolly saw Irish nationalism as essentially tied to the struggle for socialism, it was from a perspective of internationalism and opposition to the World War which had destroyed the International Socialist movement:

> *"Should the working class in Europe, rather than slaughter each other for the benefit of kings and financiers proceed tomorrow to erect barricades all over Europe .... that war might be abolished .... we should be perfectly happy in following such a glorious example." (Beresford Ellis, 1973, p237)*

Connolly believed that partition would be a disaster for Ireland, binding her yet more closely to British imperialism and bringing reaction on both sides of the border. Anti-imperialists argue that the undemocratic nature of Northern Ireland - and the

conservatism of the Republic in the south - shows this prediction to be correct. The ending of partition is essential in the struggle for socialism.

It can be argued that Connolly underestimated the opposition of Protestant workers to independence, (Morgan, 1988). Connolly's suggestion that they were led to support the Unionists by "skilful use by the master class of religious rallying cries" (cited in Martin, 1982) neglects the real material advantages which Protestant workers enjoyed in the North East. Nevertheless, in his work as a trade union organiser in Belfast Connolly encountered sectarianism in the workforce. He had some limited success in organising union action across the sectarian divide, and he knew that "the industrial working class of the North-east could not be won over by simply offering the green flag of Irish nationalism" (Munck, op cit, p46).

Connolly's execution, while elevating him to the status of national hero, also largely broke the influence of Marxist ideas on the national struggle during the crucial period of the War of Independence and the Civil War. The separation of the social question from the national question brought about the disastrous results he predicted in the divisions of the Irish working class, both North and South and within the new Northern Ireland state.

While his work is relatively little known outside Ireland, Connolly remains a major figure in Ireland's history. It is ironic that while his life's work involved asserting the indissoluble unity of the national and the socialist struggles, he is claimed both by nationalists who disavow his socialism, and by Marxists who find his nationalism a lamentable lapse.

Marxism and the Contemporary National Struggle in Ireland

Ireland's independence struggle took place when the international socialist movement had been all but destroyed by the First World War, and the failure of the workers' movements in the contending states to oppose their own ruling class. Thus the Easter Rising of 1916, and the War of Independence received virtually no political or material support from socialists in Britain or the rest of Europe. Meanwhile the destruction of the left-wing leadership after the Rising, and the abstentionist position of the Irish Labour Party during the War of Independence marginalised socialist ideas in the formation of the two new Irish states at partition.

The dominance of Unionism in the North, and conservative nationalism in the South which equated Irishness with Catholicism (Brown, 1981), meant that neither state proved fertile ground for the development of Marxist ideas. The isolation in which both states developed in subsequent years kept the socialist and labour movement insulated from ideas in the rest of the world, and ensured that with some exceptions, Ireland was neglected by non-Irish Marxists.

For about fifty years, relative stability was maintained in both parts of Ireland. The periodic eruptions of the national struggle gained limited support, and none made a major impact outside Ireland. But the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s paved the way for an urban guerilla movement unprecedented in its scale, persistence and degree of popular support. Ireland has once more been forced onto the agenda of British, and sometimes, world politics. This period of mass social upheaval brought with it a development of political consciousness within Ireland, which included renewed interest in Marxist ideas. Ireland also became a focus for some British, and to a lesser extent, US and European, Marxists.[16]

The direct military involvement of the British state in Ireland has had major implications for British society. The counter-insurgency campaign brought the development of new technology (BSSRS, 1974; Ackroyd et al, 1977) and changes in the law, avowedly aimed at combatting terrorism, which have placed considerable restrictions on civil liberties.[17] This point echoes the warning given by Marx 100 years:

> *"Ireland is the only pretext the English government has for retaining a big standing army, which if need be, as has happened before, can be used against the English workers after having done its military training in Ireland" (Marx & Engels, op cit p255).*

In spite of these developments, interest in Ireland remains marginal to British political life. The bi-partisan policy on Ireland pursued by the two major parties has effectively prevented serious discussion within mainstream politics. Restrictions on the media (Curtis, 1984) and the deportation of activists under the Prevention of Terrorism Act have also been effective in silencing dissent. But another factor must be anti-Irish prejudice - itself a product of the colonial situation - which is prevalent in Britain and extends into the socialist and labour movement. This has limited contact between Irish nationalists and British socialists, and therefore the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

Current Marxist debate on Ireland has become focused around the contributions of what has become known as the *revisionist* group. This term covers a range of thinkers both in Britain and in Ireland (particularly the South) who have rejected the nationalist version of history. While they have provided a much-need critique of the simplicities of some of the earlier anti-imperialist views, the entrenchment of these two distinct, and mutually hostile schools of thought has also tended to stifle more productive developments.

The *Anti-Imperialists*

The 'anti-imperialist' school includes those for whom partition represents a defeat for progressive forces in Ireland. The division of Ireland is seen as undemocratic, creating a reactionary Unionist-dominated state in the North, and a conservative and dependent state in the South. The current nationalist struggle is therefore broadly progressive. While they may disagree about the tactics and strategy of the Provisional IRA campaign, they sympathise with its aim of an independent united Ireland.

The ideas of this group support the emphasis placed by James Connolly on the inseparability of the nationalism and socialism in Ireland. Partition in this view represents the denial by British imperialism, in alliance with Unionism, of democracy to the majority of the Irish people. The border continues to dominate political and social life in Ireland, dividing the working class and preventing the development of independent socialist politics in either state.

British policy is aimed at maintaining these undemocratic structures. In the period up to Direct Rule this was done through the budget 'subvention' which was channelled through the Loyalist-dominated Stormont regime, and helped to reinforce sectarian practices (Troops Out Movement, 1975, p22). In the period since the 'Troubles', the main thrust of British policy has been aimed at defeating the Republican struggle, and preserving the integrity of the border.

The major contribution of this group has been in detailed analyses of the nature of the Northern Ireland state. (Farrell, 1980; O'Dowd et al, 1981; de Paor, 1971). They have argued that divisions between Protestant and Catholics are built into the structures of Northern Ireland, and that only by dismantling these institutions will the obstacles to working class unity be overcome. In this view, the destruction of sectarian state

structures is synonymous with the end of Partition, since the basis for the 'artificially created' state was sectarianism (Munck, 1992, p99).

Less progress has been made in analysing the nature of Britain's imperialist interest in Ireland. Little attempt has been made to apply recent theoretical developments in this area to Ireland. Bew et al can with some justice criticise the anti-imperialists for their conception of imperialism as:

a) too broad, in that it is not associated with any particular historical period

b) too diffuse, in that it is not associated with specific effects, but is reduced to being synonymous with violence and repression

c) formalistic, in that imperialism is seen as being merely associated with foreign presence (Bew at al, 1979).

Nevertheless, criticism of lack of rigour in some formulations does not necessarily lead to the conclusion which Bew and his collaborators draw from it; that imperialism no longer dominates Ireland. As Munck stated in a recent review of 'revisionist work' there is a debate among socialist republicans about the precise economic status of the South of Ireland, but

> *"That the Republic suffered from many of the attributes described by the Latin American theory of 'dependency' seems incontestable, so at this stage, we cannot afford to discard the theoretical framework of imperialism" (Munck, 1992, p101).*[18]

Furthermore, Coulter argues, 'clientism' rather than class politics dominates Southern Ireland, but this

> *"form of politics goes back to the compromise which ended British rule over a majority of the country and the subsequent evolution of the state" (Coulter, 1992, p9).*

Some anti-imperialist writers have explicitly argued the separation of the economic from the political in present-day Orangeism. Farrell, for example argues that the sectarian characteristics of the state are "archaic", but that Orange ideology has acquired a "virulent life of its own" (Farrell, op cit), while its material base has been eroded by "modernisation". Monopoly capital, he argues, has no interest in maintaining the sectarian structures of the state. This analysis is remarkably similar to that of Probert (1978), whose own conclusions - that modernisation will create the basis for unity between Protestant and Catholics within Northern Ireland - put her into the other camp. This position is challenged by O'Dowd et al (op cit) who argue that monopoly capital

is incapable of transforming the existing structures of the state, while sectarianism has a material reality which is constantly reproduced.

The notion of a modernising capitalism untainted by the 'distortions' of sectarianism is idealised and ahistorical. This methodology is shared by many writers on both sides of the argument, although they draw opposite political conclusions. Bambery (1987) argues that imperialism no longer dominates Ireland, but supports the demand for British withdrawal on the grounds that this would rid Northern Ireland of sectarian practices, which prevent the unity of the working class. This argument fails to address the economic basis of sectarianism, and again poses an abstract notion of 'pure' class struggle.

The *Revisionists*

The growth of *revisionism* in Irish Marxism is paralleled by similar developments in mainstream historical writing. Beresford Ellis attacked this approach in a recent lecture, arguing that it meant

> *"that history must prepare the way for an acceptance of a justification for the status quo in Ireland today, particularly in relation to the Six Counties".*[19]

He cited works by politicians Garret Fitzgerald and Connor Cruise O'Brien, and mainstream academics as well as authors like Henry Patterson who place themselves within the socialist camp. The revisionist attack on nationalist historiography is a product of recent developments in the Southern state, exemplified by the election to the presidency of the liberal and anti-nationalist Mary Robinson with the support of much of the left. Rapid capitalist industrialisation of the South in the 1970s, and the marginalisation of Sinn Fein, had led many socialists to demand that the left abandon the national question and concentrate on class politics (Bew et al, 1989). The discussion below on *socialist revisionism* will concentrate on the corollary of this position: an acceptance of the continued existence of the Northern Ireland state. Since their positions are quite distinct, some of the main contributors to this debate will be discussed separately.

The British and Irish Communist Organisation

The origins of the socialist anti-nationalist position in Ireland can be traced to a series of pamphlets produced by the British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO) from the early 1970s. This group arose from a split in the Irish Communist movement and subsequently developed overtly Stalinist positions. Their theoretical positions derive from the ideas of Bill Warren, who, claiming a return to orthodox Marxism, argued that imperialism plays a historically progressive role in hastening the development of capitalism (Warren, op cit).

Warren attacked the idea that imperialism had held back Irish development, arguing instead that colonialism had been a progressive force, and criticising the "false view that Northern or Southern Ireland is the victim of neo-colonialism" (BICO, 1975a). In an extraordinarily selective history of Ireland, the group argues that the British state initiated extensive reforms, and that imperialism "carried out the bourgeois democratic revolution in Ireland". The nationalist movement is associated with backward and reactionary forces, above all with the Catholic Church. The imperialist state, "functioned as the agent of the agrarian revolution", which triumphed before the nationalist movement, and independent of it (ibid). This analysis writes out of history the mass agitation for land reform which was bound up with the nationalist movement throughout the nineteenth century.

In *The Two Irish Nations* (1975b) they argue that there is a distinct Protestant nation which has democratic reasons to resist incorporation into the rest of Ireland. The Protestant settlers in Ulster have from the seventeenth century "cohered into a social unit", which being Protestant, individualist and bourgeois, was "in the vanguard of bourgeois civilisation". These characteristics, and the more advanced system of land holding (Ulster Custom) in Ulster brought about the development of capitalist relations in the North, separating it from the backward south. This then is the material basis for the "Two Nations" and partition.

The real national question becomes in this view not the anti-imperialist struggle of an oppressed Catholic minority in the North, but that of the Protestant nation against the designs of 'Catholic Nationalists' from the South. For the BICO, the marginalisation of Catholics within the Northern Ireland state, and the whole apparatus of discrimination and repression is a rational response to the threat from 'Catholic nationalists' to impose their rule on Ulster. In the words of Bew et al (1979) the state becomes the "expression

of the real or imagined fears" the Protestant community, and class analysis becomes redundant. This involves uncritical support for British state operations against 'catholic nationalists', and defence of the institutions of the Northern Ireland state.

This grouping now argues for the total integration of Northern Ireland into the British state, and their proposed way forward for the labour movement is to campaign to join the British Labour Party. The only denial of democratic rights in Ulster which they recognise is of the right to participate fully in the political life of Britain.

Tom Nairn

Nairn also supports the view that there is a distinct Protestant nation in Ireland. He sees this group as squeezed between Ireland and Britain, neither Irish nor British, and with no independent identity. Unlike the BICO though, he argues that this identity can only be gained if Protestants achieve self-determination within their own state.

In his view, Partition is a result of uneven capitalist development in Ireland, which produced more advanced industrialisation in the north. This gave Protestants a material interest - as well as ties of language and culture - in maintaining the British connection. But his arguments about the present are grounded in psychological rather than political analysis. Settlement of the national question is an essential precondition for the struggle for socialism in Ireland, but this is seen in terms of the Protestant community regaining a lost "psychic identity" rather than in class terms (Nairn, 1981).

Nairn argues that the current crisis in Ireland has its roots in the struggle which began in the 1950s in both states to emerge from backwardness and inward-turning. The movement towards "modernisation" arose in the South from the development of a genuinely modern bourgeoisie, with its expression in the Expansion of Industry Act of 1958;[20] and in the North from the struggle of the Catholic community for civil rights which led to conflict with the Unionist state structures. The British state, in his view has no interest in maintaining divisions within Ireland, nor does imperialism dominate either part of Ireland. Therefore the struggle for a united Ireland is not anti-imperialist, and can not transform itself into a socialist one.

While using unsubstantiated assertions to dismiss the progressive content of the national struggle, Nairn makes no attempt to demonstrate the anti-imperialist content

of an independent Ulster. It is hard to see how this demand could be progressive according to his own criteria, or those of Lenin, whose work he takes as a reference point. It is also difficult to see how this state (assuming it could be achieved without a disastrous civil war) could extend democratic rights. In his vision of an independent Ulster Nairn has nothing to say about the role of Catholics. He does not analyse the political nature of Orangeism: the apparatus of the Northern state is seen merely as "overcompensation" for the fear of betrayal to the South, but unlike BICO, these fears he sees these fears as irrational.

Bew, Gibbon and Patterson

The most thoughtful contributions of the *revisionist* school come from the various collective or individual writings of Bew, Gibbon and Patterson. As well as their trenchant criticisms of the anti-imperialist school, they have made major contributions in the study of class divisions in the Protestant community, and of the nature of the Orange state.

They argue that the emphasis on external causes of partition is mistaken. The notion of an all-powerful British imperialist interest able to manipulate divisions in order to maintain control begs the question of what that imperialist interest was, and what it now represents. Partition in their view stemmed primarily from internal causes, which, like others in the revisionist camp, they see as a product of the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland. A different mode of production was established in the North East from that prevailing in the South. In the North this was characterised by machine industry, while commercial farming prevailed in the South, with an underdeveloped social structure (Gibbon, 1975). The Protestant working class therefore had a material interest in maintaining its separation from the South.

This use of the Marxist notion of 'mode of production' here is problematic. As Smyth argues, Gibbon refers to

> ***"two types of economic activity which may or may not be subordinate to different modes of production ...The uneven pattern of development ...is common to the development of capitalist during the early phases of industrialisation. ... What was unique in the development of Ireland was the close link to a much stronger economic power" (Smyth, 1982, pp39-40).***

Most of the work of this group is concerned with the Northern Ireland state, and the relationship of classes in the 'Protestant bloc' to that state. Sectarianism is seen as a fundamental characteristic of the state, but unlike the writers discussed above, this is seen as profoundly reactionary. However, they argue that the "role of sectarianism was less in founding the state than in influencing the form that it took" (Bew et al, 1985, p20). Instead of supporting one of the various forms of Protestant self-determination, they include the Catholic working class in their programme, with appeals to working class unity. The solution they propose to the present crisis involves measures to transform the structure of the state and eliminate sectarianism.

Following Balibar, they see the role of the capitalist state as to 'hinder the unity of the dominated classes', in order to reproduce the conditions for continued exploitation of the working class. In Northern Ireland this is achieved by integrating Protestant workers into an all-class alliance, which excludes Catholics. This has the dual function of preventing Protestants from pursuing their independent class interests, and dividing the working class. The central conflict thus appears between two grand class alliances - nationalist and Unionist. The way forward is to break down these alliances by independent working class action.

This analysis shares considerable common ground with the *anti-imperialist* school. Indeed Bew and Patterson argue that the Stormont state is irreformable: "The existing state apparatus was deeply implicated in the creation of sectarian division" (Bew et al, 1985) in accounting for the failure of "modernisation" in the late 1960s. However, their argument rests on the separation of the specifically Unionist state in the North from any state structure in the North (Bew et al, 1980). Thus they believe it is possible to build alternative democratic structures within the present boundaries, and the national question becomes redundant.

The trio attack the "myth" of the monolithic character of Unionism which they claim anti-imperialist writing has perpetuated. Munck argues this is not a necessary element of socialist-republican analysis, and there "is no problem in embracing the more subtle historical analysis put forward in their book" (Munck, 1992, p96). All three argue that there have been at times significant developments towards class politics. The support of sections of the Protestant working class for the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) in the 1950s, marked a move towards secular class politics. But as Driver points out, the NILP was at this time an avowedly unionist party, and this short-lived move

represented a desire to win concessions from within the Protestant bloc rather than a move towards non-sectarian politics (Driver, 1981).

They part company with the anti-imperialists most explicitly on the crucial question of British involvement. They argue that Britain never had a substantial interest in maintaining partition, and would abandon the unionists if it became politically useful:

> *"The strategic implication of our analysis is that the problem of the involvement of the British state in Northern Ireland lies not in its existence but in its specific forms" (Bew et al, 1985, p144).*

Having stated that there is no anti-imperialist content to the present struggle, however, they state that the "British ruling class has always pursued an imperialist line" (ibid p143), a point which is not explained or developed.

The solution offered by Bew and Patterson in 1985 is that the British state, under a Labour government, initiate structural reforms in Northern Ireland, combined with a massive programme of economic recovery, and a phasing out of the RUC. This conclusion is disappointing in view of the incisiveness of much of their analysis. It does not follow from their diagnosis of the problem, and strikes one more as wishful thinking than a strategy tied into actual events in Ireland. While the "disarticulation of the two communal class alliances" may be a "task for internal socialist and democratic forces" (ibid p 150), their own analysis shows these alliances to have a material base within the state.

Furthermore, they ask the British state to carry out a task which they declare almost impossible in their analysis of the failure of modernisation, and which they criticise the Provisionals, among others, for demanding. According to their own theoretical position, this would be to ask the capitalist state to act against the interests of capital.

The demand for an economic recovery programme in the North assumes that British capitalism is capable of achieving this. They quote Rowthorn in support of this point:

> *"The ideal combination for Northern Ireland would be a vigorous programme for economic recovery in the United Kingdom as a whole together with a strong regional policy for directing investment towards the province" (Rowthorn, 1981, p27).*

However, Rowthorn's own subsequent work has led him to doubt the possibility of this programme, both in view of the deepening crisis of British capitalism, and the long run

and seemingly irreversible decline of the Northern economy within its present structure (Rowthorn & Wayne, 1988).

Another aspect of the idealism of this analysis is its failure to relate to the present set of contending forces, and to give any clear strategy for socialists in coming to terms with the actual struggles which are taking place in Northern Ireland. What for example should be the attitude of socialists to the presence of the British Army on their streets? While relying on the British state to provide the solution to the crisis, they have nothing to say about the role of the repressive apparatus of that state in its confrontation with republicans.

In a later work, Bew & Patterson' analysis of the Anglo-Irish agreement betrays a more pronounced tendency to recognise progressive elements within the Protestant community while denying them in the nationalist community. The "expanded symbolic recognition within Northern Ireland of the nationalist identity" contained within the Anglo-Irish Agreement is viewed as a "recipe for sectarian confrontation", while the restrictions on the display of Unionist symbols in traditionally Protestant-dominated workplaces is "foolish" since they restrict the "greater expression of the relatively secular and modernising aspects of the Unionist tradition." (Bew & Patterson, 1987, p56). This is a breathtaking description of a tradition by which Protestant workers have excluded, often violently, Catholic workers from employment. In an Alice in Wonderland world, "(e)qual rights is deemed sectarian and bigotry is labelled as secular" (Munck, 1992, p98).

In the context of Northern Ireland, "(c)ommitment to 'basic' class issues merely serves to reinforce the problem of working-class division" (Stewart, 1991, p185) since "economic disunity within the working class was founded upon the domination of Catholic workers" (ibid, p184). In their attempts to abstract from this key political question, Bew & Patterson, for all the sophistication of their analysis are reduced to the most banal and reactionary conclusions. Their proposed "benign way out" of the present situation is the re-introduction of periodic border polls in order to

> *"reassure Unionists and perhaps those foreign business men who ... are now doubly reluctant to invest in Northern Ireland because they see the Hillsborough Agreement as the first step to a British withdrawal" (op cit, pp54-5).*

The work of Bew, Patterson and Gibbon in particular has been important in opening debate on a series of key questions. While this work is seriously flawed, and ultimately gives support to reactionary politics, it has forced a deeper study of positions which have tended to be taken for granted in the past.

Neither side in this debate addresses questions of gender. Stewart appears to acknowledge the issue when he begins his critique of Bew & Patterson by arguing that the 'structures of institutions of subordination' in Northern Ireland which exclude Catholics not only facilitate class domination, but

> *"also equally dependent on other social relations and identities, which may be stunted in the process...These other social relations include ..... gender (op cit, p177).*

While he does not develop the idea further, it provides a useful starting point. Margaret Ward echoes this view in her discussion of the Northern Ireland women's movement

> *"Partition has divided us and it has circumscribed our strategies for change. Until we can deal with that reality the women's movement in Ireland will not develop as a strong and positive force." (Ward, 1991, p163).*

The interconnection of gender and religious subordination will be a central theme of the following chapters.

Outline of Work

The focus of this work is the study of the role of state policy and multinational capital in the reproduction of social divisions in Northern Ireland. In integrating discussion of the relationship between gender and sectarian divisions, the objective is to show that these are an integral part of class formation. The state therefore reproduces not merely class domination, but relations of gender and sectarian domination and subordination.

The specific period under consideration is the twenty years since 1972, when Direct Rule from Westminster replaced the Stormont regime. It will be argued that, while the Unionist state has been abolished, sectarian divisions remain integral to Northern Ireland. British policy, while involving some anti-discriminatory legislation, has as its

primary aim the maintenance of the Union, and cannot ultimately challenge existing forms of domination.

It will also be argued that multinational capital plays no straight forward 'modernising' role in relation to sectarian (or gender) divisions. That relationship is contradictory, since capitalism is not an abstract system, but always a historically concrete process in which classes are divided on gender, ethnic and other lines, which are reproduced in the accumulation process. In Northern Ireland foreign capital has both reproduced and undermined existing social divisions, and where anti-discriminatory measures have been undertaken, this has been a product of political struggle as much as any inherent tendency in capital itself.

In **Chapter Two**, I shall discuss some of the relevant theoretical material in an attempt to develop a framework for analysing class, gender and religious domination in Northern Ireland, and their relation to changing economic and political structures. It will be argued that while religious divisions have taken a unique form in Northern Ireland, nevertheless all capitalist societies are characterised by relations of dominance along lines of ethnicity/race and gender. Therefore as well as discussing the various competing 'explanations' for Protestant/Catholic divisions in the labour market, I shall examine some of the theoretical work on racial and ethnic divisions which potentially provides illumination in the context of Northern Ireland. This chapter also examines some of the major theories of gender subordination and their relevance to the Northern Ireland context.

Questions concerning the nature of the Northern Ireland state - particularly the relationship between sectarianism and state structures; and the relationship between Northern Ireland and the British state - have been touched on in the above discussion. This chapter will use some recent developments in the theory of the state in capitalist society in an attempt to clarify these arguments.

Chapter Three provides some historical background to the political economy of Northern Ireland. It is divided into two sections; firstly the background to Partition and the character of the Northern Ireland state; secondly the period of Stormont Rule, 1920-1972. The aim is to show the importance of gender and religious divisions in the formation of the state, and the way in which these were reproduced in the Unionist regime as the economic basis of the state shifted.

Chapter Four discusses economic policy under Direct Rule. This covers two main periods: firstly 1972 to the early 1980s, which saw a major restructuring of the economy with a decline in manufacturing and sharp increase in services, particularly in the public sector; and secondly the 1980s to the present day, which have seen elements of 'Thatcherite' economic and social policies introduced. The period has been one of economic crisis, with escalating unemployment. Northern Ireland's dependence on state employment and subsidy has led to the description 'workhouse economy' (Rowthorn, 1987).

The next two chapters discuss the impact of state anti-discrimination policies on the labour market. **Chapter Five** examines state equal opportunities policies and the record of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Fair Employment Agency and Commission. **Chapter Six** provides an overview of gender and religious divisions in employment during the period of Direct Rule, and their relation to income inequalities.

Chapters Seven and Eight examine these divisions in specific sectors. **Chapter Seven** looks at employment in large private sector firms, and particularly the record of multinational capital. **Chapter Eight** concerns the public sector. The bulk of this chapter consists of a case study of employment at the Royal Victoria Hospital in West Belfast. It aims to demonstrate the overall impact of government labour market, policy including both equal opportunities legislation and deregulation. It is based on interviews with management and trade unionists, as well as relevant published and unpublished data.

Chapter Nine summarises the findings in the previous chapters, and the implications for the possibility of overcoming sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

Notes to Chapter One

1. There are a small number of Irish-medium schools, attended almost exclusively by Catholics. For many nationalists the Irish language is a part of their Irish identity. The speaking of Irish as a first language has however virtually died out in Northern Ireland, and English is the common language for almost all purposes.

2. Approximately 98% of children attend schools in which either Protestants or Catholics are in the overwhelming majority. State schools are in effect 'Protestant' (see for example Murray, 1985) while most Catholics attend Catholic-run schools which receive state financial support through Voluntary Aided status. The National Curriculum, which under the 1988 Education Act must be taught in all 'maintained' schools,

including those with Voluntary Aided status, will make the teaching Irish history in Catholic schools more difficult. Religious education is not covered by the National Curriculum.

3. The most notorious gerrymander was in Derry City. In 1966, two thirds of the adult population was Catholic, but ward boundaries were constructed to give Unionists a majority of City Council seats by concentrating Catholic voters into one very large ward (see Farrell, pp84-5).

4. The view that capitalist modernisation will override divisions based on race, ethnicity and so on is not confined to Northern Ireland. See for example the debate on the relation between capitalism an apartheid in Wolpe, H.(1988) *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* (UNESCO), pp25-28.

5. See for example the comments of Thomas Wilson, author of the Wilson Report on the Northern Ireland economy, cited in Lee (1989) p 418.

6. This organisation has dissolved itself into the Labour Representation Committee and is primarily concerned with campaigning for the British Labour Party to organise itself in Northern Ireland.

7. The provisions of the Abortion Law Reform Act (1967) were not extended to Northern Ireland, and access to abortion remains severely restricted. Homosexual activity remains illegal, even for consenting adults in private.

8. The chair of the Fair Employment Commission, Bob Cooper, describes the Protestant-Catholic differential in male unemployment as the key target for the Commission. "We would not have legislation if it wasn't for that, and we will be judged by our ability to change it." (Interview, April 2nd, 1992).

9. According to the organisations' annual reports, the Fair Employment Commission received £1,519,000 in grant from the Department of Economic Development in the Financial year ending March 1991, compared with £934,000 for the EOC. Of this, the FEC spent £864,835 in salaries and wages, compared to less than half that figure (£382,069) for the EOC.

10. For example the decline in full-time female employment in the Belfast linen industry, and the growth of male employment in the new industries outside Belfast. While this type of change has tended to predominate, particularly in relation to full-time work, there has also been some substitution of female unskilled/semi-skilled employment in the electronics industry for traditional skilled 'male' engineering employment. The largest growth in female employment has been in public sector 'female' jobs (eg teaching, personal care).

11. In the 1992 election, the *Workers Party* received 0.91% of the vote, or an average of 1.72% in the nine constituencies in which it stood. The party has its origins in the 'Officials' side in the split in Sinn Fein which took place in 1971 on the question of the armed struggle. It is now virulently anti-nationalist and counterposes a 'non-sectarian' programme of workers' unity. The middle-of-the road 'non-sectarian' *Alliance Party* gained 9.6% of the vote. Most of its votes were won in constituencies in which there was no nationalist candidate.

12. This view is typified by the Militant Tendency. Others take the opposite position, offering unconditional (and sometimes more or less uncritical) support for the IRA. See for example the Irish Freedom Movement.

13. The combined and individual writing of Marx and Engels, are collected in a single volume, originally produced in the Soviet Union, under the title *Ireland and the Irish Question* (Marx & Engels, 1971).

14. This should be taken as the prioritising of the question, rather than as support for the *form* the struggle is taking. It is possible to argue the importance of the national question without supporting the tactic of armed struggle.

15. The Irish Citizen Army, "which has been described as the world's first Red Guard" (Beresford Ellis, 1985, p 201) was formed in October 1913 during the Dublin lock-out as workers' defence force.

16. French writers Goldring and Faligot have written on Ireland in both French and English: see for example Goldring (1991); Faligot, R. (1983) *Britain's Military Strategy in Ireland: the Kitson Experiment* (published in French and English) and Faligot, R. (1978) *James Connolly et le mouvement revolutionnaire irlandais* (Francois Maspero, Paris). See also Foley, G. (1972) *Problems of the Irish Revolution. Can the IRA meet the Challenge?* (Pathfinder Press, New York).

17. The most important of these has been the Prevention of Terrorism Act, passed in the wake of the Birmingham Pub bombings in 1974. Many hundreds of Irish people have been deported from Britain under the act.

18. See also Lysaght, 1980; Caherty et al (1992); Hoffman, 1980.

19. Greaves Memorial Lecture, 1989

20. The Expansion of Industry Act marked the shift in policy in the South after the failure of industrialisation through tariff protection towards the attraction of foreign capital through extensive grants and subsidies.

The State and Social Divisions

Introduction

The differences in the debate discussed in the previous chapter centre on the source of divisions between Protestants and Catholics, and the extent to which the Northern Ireland state, within its current boundaries, is 'irreformable'. A related question is the interest of the UK state in maintaining these divisions, and whether reformist polices under Direct Rule are capable of undermining sectarianism.

Discussion on religious divisions has until recently been relatively isolated from economic analysis. The economy tends to be dealt with fairly sketchily in the literature discussed above, with discrimination seen largely as a political phenomenon. Mainstream economists, on the other hand, priding themselves on their 'value-free' approach have seen the question as outside their sphere. This tradition continues in a recent textbook produced by economists from Queen's University in Belfast. Of its several hundred pages, two are devoted to religious discrimination, as an appendix to a chapter on the labour market (Harris, 1990). The recent study by Rowthorn and Wayne (1988) is one of the first analyses of Northern Ireland by economists which has made religious discrimination a central theme.

But the continuing efforts of government to isolate republicanism has brought some shift of emphasis. Religious discrimination in employment has become a highly sensitive political issue in recent years, with powers extended to the Fair Employment Commission (FEC) far exceeding those of other state-funded anti-discrimination bodies in Britain or Northern Ireland. Ministers clearly want to be seen to be addressing a Catholic grievance which has been at the heart of nationalist complaints about the unfairness of the Northern Ireland state. At the same time efforts have been redoubled to undermine the legitimacy of critics of government policy.[1]

While interest is focused on male unemployment, sexual disadvantage remains both a secondary and a separate concern. The institutional separation of 'fair employment' from 'equal opportunities' is mirrored in political campaigning on these issues and in academic literature. Campaigns for women's rights have generally attempted to bridge the religious divide by avoiding 'sensitive' issues. Nevertheless, many have foundered on this question (Evason, 1991 ; Ward, 1991). The reluctance of republicans to disturb their base of support in the Catholic community has limited the development of their programme for women's equality.[2] It has also made cautious in campaigning for such things as gay rights which do form part of their the programme (McLaughlin, 1986).

The academic literature has remained in even more distinct groups. If mentioned at all in the literature on national divisions, the importance of gender is merely noted. On the other hand, virtually all work on women and the labour market ignores religion (McGuire, 1987; Morrissey, 1991; Barry & Jackson, 1988). A recent work by Cockburn (1991) on exclusionary practices against women includes a substantial section on Northern Ireland, but makes no mention of religion. It is surprising that Cockburn who has made a significant contribution to feminist theorising of the social construction of gendered work should ignore this issue, while in the same work making efforts to incorporate racial divisions in her work.

An early exception was Janet Trewsdale's analysis of gender and religious divisions in the labour market based on census data (Trewsdale, 1983). While this represented an important breakthrough, the work suffers from limitations inherent in mainstream economic theorising, taking as 'given' factors which need to be explained. She concludes that Catholic women suffer disadvantage on account of sex but not religion. In a more recent work, McWilliams (1991) argues that Catholic women suffer specific disadvantage in relation to the labour market as a result of the high unemployment of Catholic men.

These studies were based on officially published statistics. No detailed study of sectarianism in the workplace has been produced comparable to those on gender such as Cockburn's (1991, 1983); or those of McLaughlin & Ingram (1991) or Maguire (1987) in relation to Northern Ireland. This reflects the continuing sensitivity of the issue.

Religion is not a straightforward category in Northern Ireland. The meanings attached to a person's identification with one religious group or another have little to do with

religious belief. Because religion is not an immediately visible identity, a variety of secondary indicators are used to assign an individual to religious group. The FEC uses,

> *"as indicators the forenames and surnames, the schools attended, the subjects studied, the leisure interests, the employment histories and the persons named as referees on application forms" (FEC 1986, p3).*

This list illustrates the degree of separation of the lives of Protestant and Catholic. In Northern Ireland, 'telling', the

> *"Syndrome of signs by which Catholics and Protestants arrive at religious ascription in their every day interaction" (Howe 1990, p13).*

becomes an integral part of social life. The sensitivity surrounding the issue helps explain why many have preferred to avoid the issue, or to mention it obliquely.[3] Nevertheless, the official surveys which ask questions on religion report a good response,[4] in spite of a limited boycott of the religion question in the 1981 census. This has allowed more detailed analysis of the structural positions of the two communities.

Religious Divisions

Explanations for inequalities in the labour market fall into two broad categories. The first seek the answer in characteristics of Catholics themselves, and deny the existence of discrimination on any significant scale; the second see discrimination as the main problem. Some argue that discrimination can be eliminated through expanded employment and equal opportunities polices; others believe that it is too embedded in the structures of Northern Ireland to be overcome within Northern Ireland itself. The labour aristocracy theory is the most widely accepted by the latter group. I shall briefly review these groups of explanation below, ending this section with a discussion of theories of racial/ethnic divisions and their relevance for Northern Ireland.

a) Catholics as the source of the problem

i) 'Cultural differences'

In its most explicitly pro-Unionist version, Catholics are viewed as 'spongers' who do not want to work (Rolston & Tomlinson, 1988 p56) and furthermore, criticise the state while accepting "welfare benefits all too eagerly, benefits they could not hope to receive across the border" (Howe, 1990, p38). Catholics cannot be trusted, since they are 'disloyal' (Farrell, 1980). Even as respectable a figure as Professor Thomas Wilson, author of the Wilson Report on Economic Development in Northern Ireland opined that

> *"as for business life, Presbyterians and Jews are probably endowed with more business acumen than Irish Catholics ... They were made to feel inferior, and to make matters worse they often were inferior, if only in those personal qualities that make for success in competitive economic life" (quoted in Lee, 1985 p418, emphasis in original).*

A more 'acceptable' version of this argument is that Catholics' larger family size is a disincentive to work, while higher population growth accounts for the gap between jobs and available labour supply in the Catholic community. This idea involves the notion that there are 'Catholic jobs' and 'Protestant jobs' (Howe, 1990). Compton, one of the main proponents of the population thesis, concludes from an analysis of population trends:

> *"While some unfairness in job allocation may exist, it is structural imbalances generated by factors specific to the Roman Catholic community, such as higher rate of population growth, lower social status, larger families, and a divergence between geographical distribution and the location of jobs, that account for a considerable part of the disparity" (Compton, 1981, p140).*

This argument is also related to Protestant fear that they will be 'outbred' by Catholics, and so lose their control over the state.

Osborne, a leading authority on unemployment differentials, rejects this view. He argues that Catholic disadvantage had appeared before the birth rates of the two communities began to differ substantially, and that these rates are becoming more similar again, while the differential remains. Furthermore this view takes no account of labour market processes where practices include "exclusion, segregation and unfair hiring practices" (Osborne, 1987, p279).

McWilliams (1991) argues that the benefit system deters wives of unemployed men from working, particularly part-time. Since Catholic men are more likely to be unemployed, this has a disproportionate effect on Catholic women. Surveys of attitudes to work do not suggest any religious difference in desire for stable long-term employment (Osborne, op cit; Kremer & Curry, 1986), although the very high unemployment rates among Catholics can have the effect of discouraging them from seeking work (Howe, 1990).

ii) Location

Compton suggests the geographical distribution of the two communities as another cause of high Catholic unemployment, and Trewsdale uses it to explain the higher rate of unemployment among Catholic women. Catholics are overrepresented in areas West of the Bann, where unemployment is high. This argument has been challenged at two levels. Firstly Catholic unemployment is higher in all areas (Census of Population, 1971; 1981). Secondly, the location of employment is not accidental, but is affected by state policies which have often been blatantly sectarian (O'Dowd, 1981). This issue is discussed further in Chapter Three.

A variation of this argument relates unemployment differentials to industrial structure, suggesting that Catholics are concentrated in sectors with high unemployment (Compton, 1981). This ignores the problem of access to certain types of employment for Catholics (for example in shipbuilding and engineering).

iii Education

Relatively lower educational attainment by Catholics is another possible source of difference. Osborne is cautious about this explanation, because

> ***"CHS data suggests that Catholics are more likely to be unemployed than Protestants irrespective of the level of qualification held and that this relationship is evident across age groups." (op cit, p 280)***

It also begs the question why Catholics should have lower qualifications. Part of the explanation must lie in the segregated system of schooling. Until recently Catholic schools have had to find a large part of their funding from their own community, and this was reflected in poorer resources and larger class size (Murray, 1983). Catholic

girls' schools provided fewer opportunities for girls to learn science while in general a different profile of subjects tended to be taken by the two communities ((Trewsdale, 1983; Osborne, 1985).

All the above arguments take as 'given' factors which need to be explained. They are part of the specific structures of the state, and reflect its sectarian and conservative character.

b) Discrimination

The widespread discrimination in employment, and other areas, under Unionist rule is well documented.[5] Government policy since Direct Rule has curbed the more overt practices, and some commentators now claim that discrimination is a thing of the past. Academic support for this view has come from Compton, and from some economists, particularly those associated with the Northern Ireland Economic Research Council (NIERC). The latter have argued that the target of reducing the male unemployment differential is unsustainable because of the slow turnover in the labour market (Murphy and Gudgin, 1991).

This issue developed into public controversy when the Director of NIERC was commissioned by Belfast City Council to defend it after an FEC report pointed to inadequacies in their employment policies (Irish News, 2.4.1992). The response of the chair of the FEC, Bob Cooper was forthright:

> *"It is nonsense to argue that they don't discriminate. You can't guarantee that there is no discrimination by any employer. At Purdysburn Hospital there is overrepresentation of Catholics but they were still found to have discriminated against a Catholic laundry worker."*[6]

In this case, the Eastern Health Board was ordered to pay £25,000 in compensation. The FEC's Annual Report for 1990-1991 mentions 41 cases for which findings had been issued, of which unlawful discrimination was upheld in 14 (FEC, 1991).

While direct discrimination is a result of individual decisions by employers, they do not control the social and economic structures in which they operate. Equal opportunities policy is isolated from other state policies, such as economic development and security, and thus have a limited impact on the structures which were built up over the years of

Unionist rule. Others have therefore explained Protestant/Catholic differentials as a product of structural relations within the Northern Ireland state.

c) The Labour Aristocracy

The labour aristocracy has "a central place in traditional Marxist analysis of Northern Ireland" (McAuley & McCormack, 1991, p116). It is however a contentious theory, both in relation to Ireland, and more generally.

The concept is mainly associated with Lenin's 'Imperialism' (Lenin, 1982). His aim in that work was to analyse the relationship between capitalism and imperialism, and to explain the support given by the workers' movements of the imperialist countries to the war efforts of their ruling class during World War One. Although the labour aristocracy was an important part of his explanation, his treatment of it was sketchy. Lenin described the labour aristocracy as

> *"the upper stratum (which) furnishes the bulk of the membership of co-operatives, of trade unions, of sporting clubs and numerous religious sects. To this level is adapted the electoral system" (Lenin, 1982, p99).*

Superprofits from the possession of colonies made it

> *"economically possible to bribe the upper strata of the proletariat, and thereby fosters, gives shape to, and strengthens opportunism" (ibid, p98)*

This group therefore depended for its relatively privileged position on imperialist conquest, and saw its interests as ultimately tied to those of the ruling class. There is thus an objective reason for divisions in the working class.

An article by Eric Hobsbawm in 1964 stimulated renewed interest in the idea. Hobsbawm aimed to characterise more precisely the labour aristocracy in nineteenth century England, identifying it in primarily sociological terms. He did not attempt to trace the link between the labour aristocracy and imperialism, referring in fact to three distinct eras - the industrial revolution, the classic age of the Labour Aristocracy and the age of imperialism - a periodisation which would appear to preclude the relation which Lenin propounded (Hobsbawm, 1986).

In the subsequent literature, criticism of the work of Hobsbawm and Lenin has centred around three main issues:

a) the problem of identifying the labour aristocracy as a distinct grouping

It has been suggested that Hobsbawm's definition is too narrow and that possession of skills and higher wages are not necessarily defining features. For Gray (1981) a degree of control over the recruitment of labour, and for Foster (1974) control over the pace of production are important in differentiating 'aristocratic' workers. Foster emphasises the different life styles of the Labour Aristocracy - their involvement with the temperance movement, co-op, trade unions and the Liberal Party - which made them a 'respectable' working class, and purveyors of bourgeois ideas in the factory, and political organisations.

Most contributors to this debate take the working class family as an unproblematic category: a feature of 'aristocratic' families was that the male's higher earnings enabled his wife to withdraw from the labour market. But Gray's work on nineteenth century Scotland showed how the division of labour in the factory "reinforced and reproduced sexual division within the family" (Gray, 1981), with the men taking on tasks classed as skilled while women's work was deemed unskilled. The concept of 'skill' is itself 'saturated with gender' (Phillips & Taylor, 1986). Status as a skilled worker depends on control over the labour process as much as 'objective' criteria of capabilities.

The labour aristocracy implies that the working class will

> *"normally unite in support of progressive and socialist ideas. Consequently, when they do not, a special explanation is required" (Reid, 1980, p113).*

Furthermore, it suggests that the least privileged sections will naturally be most politically advanced. But the working class is at any time split along a series of lines - for example by gender, race and ethnicity, religion - so class unity is something to be forged in concrete circumstances around particular struggles (Anthias & Yuval Davis, 1983).

b) the relation of the labour aristocracy to imperialism

In Hobsbawm's work, the labour aristocracy appeared before the classic age of imperialism. Although Lenin did point out that in Britain, economic developments and colonial superprofits occurred earlier, this does raise questions about the general usefulness of the concept.

Some critics argue that higher wages derived from internal sources rather than imperialism. Moorhouse (1978) stresses the revolution in techniques following the industrial revolution which brought accumulation through expanding labour productivity rather than extending the working day (relative rather than absolute surplus value) and allowed capitalists to concede higher wages. For Nairn (1964) and Anderson (1964), the impact of imperialism was primarily in developing a nationalist consciousness in the working class, rather than creating the material conditions for division.

c) the lack of a clearly specified mechanism for the 'bribery' of the working class

Lenin does not explain how superprofits are used to 'bribe' workers, and there is no evidence for any direct bribery. Gupta (1975) argues that if workers were bribed by imperialism, it should be most in evidence in industries, for example ship building, most dependent on imperial markets. This, he suggests, is not the case. Foster (op cit) in his study of Oldham claims to show a direct link between imperialism and the labour aristocracy, by arguing that workers in the engineering industry gained more security from the export of machinery to Russia.

One can argue that there is no necessity for a direct link between individual groups of workers and capitalists: employers will not necessarily set out consciously to buy off workers through higher wages, but colonial superprofits allow the possibility of conceding higher wages and welfare provision to organised groups of workers without jeopardising accumulation.

The Labour Aristocracy in the Northern Ireland Context

Following Connolly's use of the labour aristocracy to describe the 'Orange working class' at the beginning of the century, *anti-imperialists* have adopted the concept as a

standard tool. Religious divisions are viewed as arising from the material privileges which Protestants derive through their relationship to the state. The term has however been stretched to cover a variety of groups and situations, and sometimes appears more as a general derogatory description of Protestant privilege than one with a precise meaning. *Revisionists* have tended to use it in a much more restricted sense which they claim is closer to Lenin's own work (Bew et al, 1980, p158).

Labour aristocracy has been used variously to describe the Protestant community (Bell, 1976, p22), the Protestant working class (Marlowe & Palmer, 1978, p12), Protestant manual workers (Farrell, 1980, p16), or Protestant skilled workers (Gibbon, 1975). In each case it is identified as Protestant. This slippage of meaning can present a view of the Protestant community as homogeneous, or a simplistic identification of Protestant with skilled labour and Catholic with unskilled. It is often used ahistorically, suggesting that no significant change has taken place since Partition. Marlowe & Palmer, quoting Connolly argue that "the Protestant workers formed a labour aristocracy which allied itself with imperialism" (op cit, p12). This aristocracy has, they suggest, persisted throughout the whole period, and in "Belfast, the workers are divided into unskilled Catholic and skilled Protestant workers" (ibid, p13).

Anti-imperialists tend to use labour aristocracy in its wider senses, to explain the material existence of specifically Protestant privilege, and the impossibility of reforming the Northern Ireland state. The possibility of any commonality of interests between Protestant and Catholic is denied. Marlowe & Palmer, describing the "economic and social revival of Ulster in all spheres" in the O'Neill period of the 1960s, say categorically that it was "only the Loyalists who enjoyed the benefits" (ibid p19).

For the *revisionists* the labour aristocracy refers to specific groups of skilled workers at a particular point in time, such as Gibbon's discussion of shipyard workers at the turn of the century. According to Gibbon, their aristocratic status derived from possession of craft skills which gave them some independence; a high degree of control over their own conditions and pace of work; and the physical isolation of the docks which "lent it the status of a culture-building work of its own" (Gibbon, 1975, p84). The shipyard was "a bulwark of British imperialist might", and consequently the prosperity of the shipyard workers was tied to "the state of British capitalism internationally" (ibid). For Reid, however, attachment to the labour aristocracy undermines the usefulness of his analysis, since it

"tends to underestimate the complexity of the shipyard labour process and produces the notion of a homogeneous labour aristocracy." (Reid, 1980, p84)

For Gibbon as for Bew, the distinct ideology of the labour aristocracy "combining militant anti-Catholicism with democratic anti-landlord and anti-capitalism sentiment" (Bew et al, 1979, p46) was undermined by the populist wing of the Unionist bourgeoisie with the formation of Northern Ireland. The labour aristocracy is not a permanent feature, and "sectarianism is not a structural component of the state ... rather the outcome of particular moments of class struggle" (Stewart, 1991, p194).

When this group of workers reappears in their analysis, they are seen as the most progressive section of Protestant workers: in opposition to anti-imperialist conceptions of the labour aristocracy, they argue that it was skilled workers who were the backbone of the Northern Ireland Labour Party in the 1950s (Bew et al, 1980, p158). However, in viewing this party as unambiguously progressive and secular, they underestimate the degree to which support for sectarianism could coexist with a specifically Protestant working class politics.

Both the wide and narrow conception of labour aristocracy are deeply flawed. The *revisionists* are right to point to confusions in the *anti-imperialist* version, but their own analysis is unsatisfactory. It separates the existence of the Unionist state, with its "apparatus of fifty year's reproduction of populist sectarianism" (ibid, p161) from the working class, the recipients of sectarian privilege, and makes abstract calls for "unity of the oppressed" (ibid, p160).

The labour aristocracy idea carries too heavy a weight of explanation in the *anti-imperialist* version. The term was inadequately developed by Lenin, and far from adding theoretical rigour to the anti-imperialist account, tends to act as a barrier to understanding. The positive aspect is that it suggests a material explanation for working class divisions. These are not related purely to wage differentials, but spread into every aspect of life, and derive from the relationship of Protestants to the state. But in attempting to make Protestant workers fit the Leninist concept, they falsely conflate Protestants with skilled workers. There is no simple one-to-one relation between Protestants and skilled work, although there are major differences in the *proportions* of skilled workers in each group, as with other indicators of inequality. Perhaps more importantly, in Protestant consciousness, they are the skilled workers, and Catholics "the despised 'croppies'" (Wilson quoted in Lee, 1989, p418).

The relation with Britain, and the Empire has been crucial to Orangeism, both in terms of material interest and ideology. As Gibbon's analysis suggests, Protestant-dominated industry developed to serve a world - and particularly Empire - market. At partition, much of it was directly or indirectly concerned with armaments and other war commodities, and thus the fate of Protestant workers was tied to the fate of the Empire. The descendants of the colonial settlers of Cromwell's time, Protestants still in many ways see themselves as defenders of the British Empire, maintaining civilised standards and the Protestant way of life against the tide of barbarism or Romanism (Bell, 1976). Loyalty is demonstrated in the annual celebration of the Battles of Empire by Orange Lodges. During World War II, a *Commonwealth* Labour Party was formed in Northern Ireland.

The decline of the traditional industrial base on which the skilled labour force depended, suggests that explanations for the continuation of Protestant privilege must be sought elsewhere than either the historically limited version of the labour aristocracy of the *revisionists*, or the historically unchanging version of some *anti-imperialists*. The sense of betrayal felt by the Protestant community over the Anglo-Irish agreement (Teague, 1987), and the spectacle of loyalists marching against the British government, and at times engaging in bloody confrontation with the RUC, suggests that these relationships may not be immutable.

d) Ethnicity in Northern Ireland

If the labour aristocracy provides a limited theoretical basis for understanding sectarian divisions, alternatives must be sought which both encompass the depth of these divisions, and their capacity for continuity and change. In his study of two Belfast housing estates, Howe describes how the

> ***"two communities have been established and they are kept in being by the complex interaction of cultural, ethnic, political and economic factors. These tend to be mutually reinforcing, ...the cultural differences which act as boundary markers, to label and identify the two groups are also used to recruit people to kinship groups, economic roles and political positions and this in turn consolidates the separation of the two communities" (Howe, 1990, p31).***

This use of ethnicity is powerful in describing the segregation of the two communities, and the links between the economic and cultural aspects, neither of which are captured by the labour aristocracy. But it is important that an understanding of *difference* should

not be at the expense of *inequality*, which is central to the labour aristocracy theory. The definition of an ethnic group generally denotes "some level of political, cultural or economic inferiority" (Ramazanoglu, 1989, p119). As Anthias and Yuval Davis (1983) put it,

> *"Our use of the term ethnicity has as a central element exclusionary/inclusionary practices and the relations of power of dominance/subordination" (p67).*

Ethnicity and race are often used as interchangeable concepts (as in 'ethnic minority') and they share "both the categories of exclusion and power". But "(r)acist discourse posits an essential biological determination to culture" (ibid p67). Miles & Phizacklea (1980) define racism as:

> *"those negative beliefs held by one group which identify and set apart another by attributing significance to some biological or other 'inherent' characteristic(s) .... The possession of these supposed characteristics is then used as justification for denying that group equal access to material and other resources and/or political rights." (p22)*

In the Northern Ireland context there is no obvious physical distinction between Protestant and Catholic on which to hang racist practice. But "the social practice of racial difference cannot be understood in terms of physical difference" (Ramazanoglu, p120) and

> *"'race' has no reality other than as a social construction" ..(so).. what has to be explained is not 'race in itself' but a social construction" (Miles & Phizacklea, 1980, p2).*

The FEC's guidelines for assessing religion mentioned above use the classifications

> *"Protestant, Roman Catholic or Other, where Other was used variously to describe those for whom the Agency officer was not prepared to make a religious identification and those not born or educated in Northern Ireland" (FEC, 1986, p 5).*

This makes clear that the categories 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' only have social meaning within the context of Northern Ireland. Curtis (1984b) has shown how Irish people have been 'racialised' and portrayed as 'inferior' throughout the history of colonialism. In the nineteenth century, at the height of 'scientific' racism, the need to control the Irish was 'explained' in terms of the presumed biological characteristics of smaller skull sizes and different shaped heads.

Wilson (see above) makes use of supposedly 'inherent' characteristics of Catholics to explain their inferior status as do the other negative stereotypes which centre on 'disloyalty', 'laziness', 'scrounging'. There are of course reciprocal stereotypes among the Catholic community. Murray's study of the staff of schools serving different communities showed that Catholics thought of Protestants as humourless and hard-working (Murray, 1985). But apart from the differences in the images themselves, the Catholics' views of Protestants are not reinforced by political power over them.

While it seems apparent that varying forms of racist discourse have been used to underpin Protestant exclusionary practices, I find the use of ethnicity, which does not depend on a supposed biological base, a more generally useful concept in relation to Northern Ireland. Anthias and Yuval Davis define 'ethnic phenomena' as

> *"forms of ideological construct which divide people into different collectivities or communities. This will involve exclusionary/inclusionary boundaries .... although the constructs are ideological, they involve real material practices and therefore origins and effects" (ibid p66).*

This encompasses the essential elements in the relationship between the two communities. It makes central the notion of power relations, which are tied to exclusion/inclusion. The importance of material practices is also stressed, which in Northern Ireland appear in various forms of discrimination operated both an individual and group level, and at the level of the state.

Another dimension to ethnicity in Northern Ireland is the way in which gender imagery is blended with religious difference, so that Catholics are stereotyped as 'female' and the dominant Protestant group is portrayed as male (Goldring, 1991). Anthias and Yuval Davis (1989) argue that gender is important in marking the 'boundaries' of nations and ethnic groups. In Northern Ireland, relations of oppression based on religion have invoked gender. Woman's eternal suffering is a metaphor for Ireland's oppression. 'Mother Ireland' 'dark Rosaleen' is a figure running through nationalist mythology and culture, while Derry City is known both as the 'Maiden City' and 'mother of us all' (McLaughlin, 1986). Neither image is liberating, and their converse, the whore, is as essential complement to this notion of womanhood (Rolston, 1989). Protestant imagery is masculine, with male power in the workplace and the family buttressing Protestant power in the state.

These stereotypes are reflected in the labour market, where traditionally female occupations are also predominantly Catholic, while the archetypal Protestant worker is the male, skilled manual worker. 'Female' jobs are of course of relatively low status, and reflect the difficulty of access for Catholic men (as well as women) to high status occupations. Both are "underpinned by a notion of a 'natural' relation" which serves to "legitimise" inequality (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1983, p67).

The Dual Labour Market

Dual labour market theories - originally developed to explain the segregation of black workers in the United States in low-status jobs, and also used in relation to gender - would appear to have some relevance here. In an early formulation Gordon (1972) rejects the neo-classical view of a homogeneous labour market, arguing that segmentation arises because firms require different types of labour which dictate different employment strategies: on the one hand, in order to retain skilled labour, employers need to create an internal career structure (the primary labour market), while for unskilled, dispensable labour, insecurity is important in maintaining management control (the secondary labour market). The promotion of disunity between workers is also important.

The recognisability of different groups (eg black workers; women) provides a convenient screening device for recruitment to the two labour markets, while the characteristics ascribed to these workers legitimate unequal treatment (eg women are unreliable because of domestic commitments; black workers are lazy, unskilled). On the other hand, some characteristics applied to these groups are desirable from the point of view of employers (women's 'nimble fingers'; Asian women's 'docility'). But since these characteristics of subordinated groups are taken to be natural, they are not accorded status in terms of higher wages.

In Northern Ireland, Catholics are lazy, unreliable, and disloyal, but they also have the 'female' quality of caring, and are overrepresented in the female professions as well as unskilled labour. Their 'recognisability' comes not primarily from physical characteristics, but from socially acquired characteristics (accent, schooling, place of residence) whose divisions along religious lines are embedded in society, and are well known to potential employers. The Catholic/Protestant division has also served to create a workforce with different characteristics - Catholics have fewer technical skills and

experience of work so even without overt discrimination, a separated workforce is perpetuated.

The Dual Labour Markets theory has been criticised on three main grounds. **Firstly** there are major exceptions, which leave groups unexplained. One of the most obvious of these is 'female' professional occupations. This clearly applies to the growing number of Catholic women professionals in Northern Ireland, the majority of whom are engaged in servicing their own community. **Secondly** the theory takes as given the 'ascribed' characteristics of the dominated group, and does not enquire into their origins. It is "easy to confuse the properties of jobs with characteristics of job holders" (Barron & Norris, 1976) while those who hold particular jobs may acquire these characteristics, so the explanation becomes circular.

Thirdly, emphasis on employers' manipulation of labour underestimates the role played by the dominant group of workers in excluding potential competitors. Exclusionary practices can be against the interests of capital, as in the case of the struggle by print workers against management attempts to replace skilled male labour with 'semi-skilled' female labour (Cockburn, 1983), or the strike by white workers in South Africa in the 1920s to maintain a colour bar excluding black workers from skilled jobs. Exclusionary practices in Northern Ireland, such as the use of Protestant Orange Lodges for recruiting labour, are well documented and clearly require the collaboration of both management and labour. But there have also been times when management and workers have come into conflict on this issue, for example at Harland and Wolff in the 1860s (see Chapter Three) and more recently at Short Brothers on the question of the display of Loyalist flags.

A **fourth** problem, which is of particular importance in the Northern Ireland context, is the tendency to view the capitalist firm in isolation from the wider role society. But the state not only reproduces the values of the dominant group, but intervenes directly in the labour market through legislation which has differential effects. Firms also have individual relations to the state as for example recipients of subsidies and suppliers of commodities. The Stormont regime explicitly legitimated discrimination against Catholics. Lord Craigavon, the first prime minister, was quoted in 1933 as saying:

"There were a great number of Protestants and Orangemen who employed Roman Catholics. he felt he could speak freely on this subject as he had not a Roman Catholic about his own place. ... He would appeal to Loyalists therefore, wherever possible, to employ good Protestant lads and lasses." (Farrell, 1980, p90)

Segregation in Northern Ireland takes a distinct form as a result of a history which has given a unique social meaning to the categories Protestant and Catholic. In introducing ethnicity into the discussion, I have attempted to do two things. **Firstly** to provide a more comprehensive category for understanding the social, economic and political segregation of the two groups in Northern Ireland than is provided by the usual analysis in terms of labour aristocracy. And **secondly**, to suggest that these divisions are not a product of a peculiar Irish attachment to religious struggles which the rest of the world has outgrown; rather they have similarities to, though they are distinct from, other forms of ethnic division. These divisions, which appear as religious sectarianism have their own 'relatively independent rhythms' (Rolston & Munck, 1987, p95), so

"class and religion generated two forms of political practice ... and were not mutually exclusive" (ibid p8).

Gender Subordination

The religious divide which dominates political life both reinforces the patriarchal nature of Northern Ireland society, and undermines the self-organisation of women against gender inequality. For while these divisions centred on religious affiliation are not about religion as such, they nevertheless mean that the Church becomes an important focus in organising the community and shaping political and social views. Feminists have to confront not only the ideological dominance of church teaching, but the idea that to argue for a politics which rejects the Church shows disloyalty to the group. McLaughlin, in her study of Derry City found that:

"to identify as Catholic was, and still is, perceived by many Catholics as an anti-colonial act in itself" (while colonialism had) "ensured the survival in Northern Ireland of a particularly conservative form of Catholicism" (McLaughlin, 1986, p369).

This conservatism, particularly on the family and sexuality is also shared by the Protestant Churches. Unionist control of the state apparatus, has restricted women's rights both by legal prohibitions (on for example abortion), and through lack of social

provision (for example childcare). This situation has impeded women's involvement in the labour force and in political life both at a practical and ideological level.

The literatures on gender and religious divisions have, as noted above, remained very distinct. This is not unique to Northern Ireland. Separation of gender from race/ethnicity has been a feature of feminist literature in general, which, particularly in the 1970s took the white nuclear family as the norm,[7] while much of the literature on race assumed a male-centred model (eg Castles and Kosack, 1974). Nevertheless, many theoretical concerns are shared, and some concepts developed in one area (including the Dual Labour Market theory discussed above) have been borrowed and adapted to the other.

A substantial literature on gender inequality in work has been developed in the past three decades (for example Beechey, 1987; Walby, 1986 and 1991; Amsden 1982; Feminist Review, 1986) This has addressed three main issues: inequality of access to paid work; income and status differentials in paid work; and segregation in the workplace. Early theories tended to concentrate on the family and domestic labour as obstacles to women's participation in paid labour, while more recently discussion of the workplace itself has predominated. Theories in both groups span a range of positions, from liberal to socialist feminist. I shall not attempt a comprehensive critique of these views, but try to point to ideas which have been particularly important in understanding gender divisions in Northern Ireland, or those which offer insights into both gender and sectarian divisions.

The Family and Gender Subordination

Liberalism

Analysis of the family and domestic labour has been placed outside mainstream economic theorising. Political economy as a discipline developed with the development of industrial capitalism, which brought the separation of production from the family. The economy became the public sphere of production, distribution, and exchange of commodities through the market. Reproduction of the labour force and care of dependents became a private activity. The role of family labour, which did not produce commodities, was excluded from socially productive labour, and therefore outside the scope of economic analysis. As well as excluding unpaid domestic labour, economic theory assumes away power relations within the family, taking the household as a unit

with a common interest. The altruism of the family is the antithesis of the individualist values of the market place. (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). Waylen's critique of neo-liberal theory is applicable to economic theorising generally:

> *"There is obviously a contradiction here: on the one hand, individuals are the basic units of society, interacting in the free market, but, on the other hand, it is only the male head of the household who behaves as an individual. ... The main implication of this conflation of neo-liberalism is that the doctrine of the individual becomes the doctrine of the male, as the sex which can enjoy the 'rights' and 'privileges' of the free market" (Waylen, 1986, pp95-6).*

These tensions emerged more explicitly within New Right thinking, where individualism in the economic sphere has been accompanied by conservative rhetoric on the family (David,1986). The contradiction between economic freedom and 'traditional' values can be reconciled only if women are excluded from full participation in economic life.

Conventional economics not only excludes discussion of the family, but marginalises analysis of sexual inequality in work. The approach precludes discussion of structural inequality, since the 'individual' comes to the market with a fixed endowment of 'factors of production', and all are socially equivalent in a neutral market place. Within this framework, neo-classical theorists explain wage differentials by individual differences in 'human capital'. Women receive lower wages because of lower productivity due to differential acquisition of skills, training, experience (human capital). Discrimination is 'irrational' for a profit maximising firm, since if women could supply labour of the same productivity as men at a lower wage, they would be employed instead. Lower pay is a result of an individual's choice to spend less effort in acquiring marketable skills. This also rules out discrimination on other grounds, such as religion.

This explanation has been challenged on empirical grounds (see for example Amsden, 1980). More fundamentally, feminists have challenged the notion of skill as a purely objective category. (Cockburn, 1983; Phillips and Taylor, 1986).

Human Capital theory takes for granted that it is women who should carry out domestic labour. Women have a 'comparative advantage' in caring, while men's advantage is in market-orientated attributes such as competitiveness. It is notable that in seeking explanations for sexual difference, economists have resorted to 'non-economic' explanations which are imported uncritically into the analysis. A similar process is used by Wilson to account for Catholic disadvantage. As Lee points out,

"Not only did he not feel obliged to produce a scintilla of evidence in support of his assumption of pervasive Catholic inferiority, but he failed to enquire if there might be any connection between the assumed inferiority and the admitted earlier discrimination. The rigour of the reasoning would scarcely pass muster with Wilson on any other subject" (Lee, op cit, p419).

An alternative 'liberal feminist' view suggests that attitudes and values are not natural and unchanging, but socially constructed. Distinguishing between 'sex role' and 'gender role', they argue that women's career horizons are limited since they are socialised into seeing their primary role as wives and mothers. The corollary of this view is the need for measures to eliminate sexism, particularly in education.

The growth of women's employment in the post-war period led to concern with the pressures placed on women by their 'dual role' as workers and mothers (Myrdal & Klein, 1970). The concentration was on barriers to women's entry into the labour force, and led to demands for more flexible working hours. However, these problems were seen as essentially a 'dilemma' for the individual woman, a conflict of roles, which she is able to overcome more or less satisfactorily.

While this work raised serious issues, it is limited by a methodology which takes for granted what needs to be explained. The central questions of the functions of the family and the role of women as the main providers of domestic labour are not addressed. This methodology is evident in Trewsdale's work on Northern Ireland, in which she attributes religious differences in employment to different levels of skill, and to the location of industry, as if these were unproblematic facts.

Marxist Theories

Much feminist analysis developed as a response to perceived inadequacies in Marxism, and shares many of its central ideas. One of the most crucial is that exploitation and oppression are not incidental features of capitalism, but are essential elements of the system. But feminists argue that Marx's concentration on class division excluded serious consideration of sexual inequality and other non-class divisions. His work focused on the relations of commodity production; the sphere of reproduction, though acknowledged, was not of major interest. He tended to lapse into an essentialist view, taking the sexual division of labour in family relations for granted (Jagger, 1983). Engels (1970) made a pioneering material analysis of women's oppression, which he linked to the development of the family and private property. For him, however, women's

specific oppression - and indeed the family - would wither away with the socialisation of labour through modern industry.

In the 1970s, a revival of interest in feminist ideas led Marxists to reexamine the basis for women's oppression under capitalism, particularly the persistence of the nuclear family. While recognising that the family was central to women's oppression, this was analysed primarily in terms of its functionality to capitalism. Various aspects of this relationship were prioritised by different theorists.

a) Most concern focused on the relation of **domestic labour** to capital accumulation. While domestic labour is not a commodity, and therefore has no 'value', it is essential for the reproduction of labour power and therefore for capital (Gardiner, 1975). Much energy was spent in 'the domestic labour debate' in trying to theorise the precise role of domestic labour (Molyneux, 1979). This debate remained abstract and in the end could only move on through more concrete studies. But the issues it raised have been of central importance to feminist theorising and political campaigning.

b) Women's dependence on the male wage was used to explain their role as part of a **reserve army of labour** (Marx, 1976, vol ch 25). Women could be paid less than men since part of the cost of their reproduction was covered in the family. Thus women represented a marginal group who could be brought into the labour force in times of expansion, and return to the family when no longer needed (Beechey, 1987). Bruegel (1989) has argued convincingly that while this relationship may have been true for example during wartime, it cannot be used as a general explanation. Widespread gender segregation in the labour force means that women's work does not substitute directly for men's labour.

c) Braverman (1974) in his work on the US economy argued that increasing management control over the labour process brought **deskilling** and the replacement of skilled male labour by female. This undermined the economic role of the family, which became important primarily as a unit for the consumption of the products of capitalist industry. Male and female roles thus tend to converge.

d) Michele Barrett (1980) stressed the **ideological role of the family** in ensuring the stability of capitalist relations of production. She theorises a triangular

relationship between the family, state and the workplace, in which familial ideology is mediated through all three institutions.

These various positions were extremely important in removing the 'invisibility' of domestic labour and showing its crucial economic and social role. But the functionality of the family to capitalism was over-emphasised at the expense of both the extent to which men benefit from women's subordination, and the contradictions between family and capitalism.

Feminism and the household

The use of the term *patriarchy* gives central importance to gender relations. While it has been used in many different ways, and some feminists are unhappy with using it at all (Beechey, 1987), it serves to focus attention on the way unequal power relations are embedded in social structures; the state, family, workplace. The relation between patriarchy and capitalism has been variously interpreted: radical feminism counterposes patriarchy as the main oppressor to the Marxist concentration on exploitation by capitalism. Others have viewed them as two systems of oppression. For Hartmann (1979), the two became one system of 'capitalist patriarchy'. For Delphy (1984), the two spheres are distinct. She used a theory analogous to the marxist theory of surplus value to explain the exploitation of women's unpaid labour in the family.

I prefer a view of patriarchy and capitalism as two relatively autonomous systems, neither reducible to the other. In this view, patriarchy is both functional to capitalism, but also contradictory with it. The relation is one of "conflict and accommodation" (Dale & Foster, 1986), and varies in different historical periods (Walby, 1986). For example the post-war expansion of the female labour force enabled profitable accumulation, but undermined patriarchal control in the household (ten Tusscher, 1986).

This analysis helps illuminate the contradictions at the heart of the neo-liberal theory, which stem from the fact that commodity production (the 'economic' sphere) is dependent on reproduction of labour power outside the sphere of commodity production itself. Though capitalism viewed in the abstract may appear ungendered, this is not possible either historically, or theoretically, since capital accumulation is dependent on the sexual division of labour within the 'private sphere' of the family. Capital cannot

directly control this process. Although the state intervenes to regulate the family and reproduction, there are limits to this intervention within capitalism (Keane, 1988).

The presentation of the 'nuclear' family with male breadwinner and dependent wife, as the universal type of family relation under capitalism has been attacked by black feminists as Eurocentric. In Northern Ireland, high male unemployment means that women, particularly Catholics, are often not dependent on a male wage, but via their husbands on welfare benefits. This also restricts their own access to labour market. It does not appear however that male unemployment has a major impact on the domestic division of labour (Campbell et al, 1991).

Much of the analysis discussed so far tends to view the household in isolation: women's oppression in the family is counterposed to a relatively gender-free workplace. This is particularly pronounced in Delphy's version of sexual exploitation at home, and capitalist exploitation at work. The notion of *public patriarchy* (Walby, 1990) focuses on the world of paid work, and the state, as major reproducers of gender domination.

Gender in the Workplace

In every economy in the world, there is *women's work* and *men's work*, although what is women's work in one country may be men's work elsewhere. What is constant is inequality in status and rewards. The range of female occupations is narrower than male (Beechey, 1986). This *horizontal segregation* is tied to *vertical segregation* (Hakim, 1979). In all occupational groups women are under-represented at the top, even if (as in 'female professions' such as teaching) they dominate the bottom rungs.

Women and men experience employment restructuring differently. The growth of part-time employment has been almost entirely female, while for men, flexible employment is achieved through for example overtime working. Beechey and Perkins (1987) suggest that

> *"many of the characteristics of part-time work do not stem from some general economically defined process ..... the division between full-time and part-time work is one crucial contemporary manifestation of gender within the sphere of production" (pp8-9).*

Divisions based on gender intersect with those of class, ethnicity and so on. In Northern Ireland the sectarian division has led to specific types of labour becoming 'Protestant men's work', or 'Catholic women's work.'

Studies of individual work places demonstrate how gender saturates all aspects of the work experience. Cockburn (1991) describes how masculinity and femininity is constructed in different working environments. In comparing for example civil servants and male manual workers, she shows how very different conceptions of masculinity can be equally exclusionary.

The garment industry in Northern Ireland displays a high degree of gender segregation, and

> *"pay rates have historically been determined by the sex of those in an occupation rather than by the inherent complexity and responsibility of the job." (McLaughlin & Ingram, 1991, p46).*

Liberal feminists recognise the existence of discrimination in the workplace, and aim to eliminate unfair practices. 'Sexism' and 'traditional attitudes' on the part of individual employers are blamed. Legislation on equal pay and sex discrimination and the abolition of restrictions such as those which forced women to leave work on marriage, have removed much of the formal barriers to equality in the UK.

Feminists also point to the existence of informal power structures which exclude women (Cockburn, 1983; 1991). An alternative 'female networking' has become common, particularly among women in business and the professions. Equal opportunities policies often recognise these informal power structures, and aim to eliminate discriminatory practices in recruitment and promotion by creating sets of procedures based on neutral criteria. These criteria are designed to eliminate not merely sex bias but also for example religious bias.[8]

But while for the liberal feminist these problems are essentially solvable by these measures, gender inequality remains a structural feature of paid work.

Exclusionary Practices

Some feminists have argued that exclusionary practices in the workplace have been as important as the family in restricting women's involvement in the labour force. Walby (1986) has shown how female entry to many occupations was prevented through exclusive male trade union control and legal restrictions in the nineteenth century. Legislation barring women's employment, avowedly to protect them from dangerous work was selectively applied, so that where women did not compete for employment with men, they were not protected.

While these formal restrictions have largely been eradicated, exclusionary practices persist. Cockburn has shown the power of male workers to keep women from skilled work in the print industry. One of the main ways of excluding groups is through 'informal recruiting'. The family traditions of the print industry excluded women as well as other groups deemed undesirable. Another way of excluding women from 'skilled work' has been in the 'informal' paths by which knowledge of the job is passed on, and the 'male culture' in which this takes place. A study of Fleet Street journalists shows how young female recruits were at a disadvantage if they do not feel comfortable in the male, pub-orientated networks in which journalists tend to operate which are essential to learning the trade (Smith, 1986).

The recent prominence of the issue of sexual harassment at work has undermined the notion of work as a neutral asexual territory (Hearn & Parkin, 1987). This raises the whole question of 'workplace culture' and its role in maintaining sexual (and religious) dominance.

In Northern Ireland religious harassment has become a more public concern, although the first two sexual harassment cases in the UK were taken by the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland (EOCNI).[9] Sexual harassment includes not merely physical or verbal abuse but displays of offensive material. Religious harassment too has ranged from extreme violence[10] to displays of flags and material of one religious group. This was banned under the Flags and Emblems Act.

Sex and skill

One of the most prominent themes in Braverman's work is the deskilling of labour - splitting execution from conception - as part of management strategy to control the labour process. He argued that male skilled jobs were replaced by unskilled female jobs. His work portrays the process as one-sided, with workers relatively passive. He conceives of 'skilled labour' as an objective category. Beechey (1987) suggests that socially recognised skills embody different aspects, which tend to be conflated:

a) *"Complex competencies which are developed within a particular set of social relations of production and are objective competencies ...(combining) conception and execution and (involving) the possession of particular techniques."*

b) *"Control over the labour process"*

c) *"Conventional definitions of occupational status" (p83).*

Deskilling under monopoly capitalism is not linear, but a complex and uneven process of "destruction and recomposition of skills". There has been resistance to the encroachment of capital, and workers have sought to maintain control partly through excluding other groups seen as threatening their position. The discussion above on the labour aristocracy showed how traditional skills (a) were often undermined, to be replaced by workers with some control over the production process, as pacesetters, and foremen (b). A major contribution of feminists has been to shown how the classification of jobs as skilled is sex related (c) (see eg Cockburn, 1983; Phillips & Taylor, 1986).

Mclaughlin & Ingram show how women garment workers are recruited on the basis of 'natural aptitude' which assumes previous experience of sewing. The skills which they bring with them are not counted in determining their status within work. Women workers experienced only "piecemeal and largely unrecognised training" within the firm, whereas cutters and mechanics, who were mainly male, were given formal training, and no previous competence was required (op cit. p35).

Women's subordination is thus materially embodied within the production process. But this is not static, as for example new techniques may make it profitable to replace skilled workers with unskilled. But these changes threaten the existing basis of the division of labour, which is the product not merely of the labour process, but of the ideology of gender division in which this labour process operates (Barrett, 1980). In Northern Ireland, changes in the labour process threaten not only gender, but sectarian domination.

Gender and Religious Divisions

> *"Within western societies, gender divisions are more important for women than ethnic divisions in terms of labour market subordination. In employment terms, migrant or ethnic women are usually closer to the female population as a whole than to ethnic men in the type of wage-labour performed" (Anthias and Yuval Davis (1983, p69).*

This is in tune with the official view in Northern Ireland that religious inequality in employment is primarily a male problem. At first glance, the figures bear this out. The employment profiles of Catholic women and Protestant women are much more similar than those of Catholic and Protestant men. Catholic women are disadvantaged relative to Protestants, but this disadvantage is smaller than the male.[11]

But where such wide-ranging divisions based on religion exist, it is not conceivable that women's employment should escape its effects. I suggested above that Catholic women have a specific relation to the labour market which is a product of both gender and religious subordination. This arises both from the way the labour market is structured by gender and religion, and through family relationships. Below I sketch some of the ways in which these interact, and in the next section will show how these are reinforced at the level of the state.

a) Almost total religious segregation in schooling creates different educational experiences. The different emphasis of the two education systems has led to a different profile of subjects taken by Protestants and Catholics, and specifically Catholic girls and Protestant girls. This obviously has implications for occupational choice (Trewsdale, 1983).

   The tendency for each community to service its own has led to overrepresentation of Catholic men in the medical and legal professions, and of Catholic women in nursing.

b) Social and educational segregation affects the views that two communities hold of each other (Murray 1986; Donnan & McFarlane, 1983). This reinforces reluctance to work with the 'other side', and therefore segregation in work. It is well established that women travel shorter distances to work than men. This is due to lack of access to transport; their generally lower incomes; and to their concentration in part-time work. In Northern Ireland this is exacerbated by the

problem of crossing 'hostile territory'. Residential segregation has increased since the start of the 'Troubles'.

c) Family relationships and ideology affect women's ability to work. The relatively high birth rate among Catholics, and the large number of women with dependent children and adults restricts access to labour force. The EOCNI's study of attitudes to work showed Catholic women relatively more liberal than Protestants, and suggests that the existence of 'traditional values' cannot be taken for granted (Kremer & Curry, 1986; see also Montgomery & Davies, 1991). But traditional values have been embodied in state policy and employment practices. Poor child-care facilities and lack of flexibility in working hours (Mclaughlin & Ingram, 1991) often make the practical problems of combing paid work and caring for dependents insurmountable.

d) Women experience different relations to the labour market through their partner. Catholic men are much more likely to be unemployed than Protestant men, which creates a disincentive for their wives to work, especially part-time, due to the loss of benefits they would incur (McWilliams, 1991). The popular notion of women as 'breadwinners' in Derry has been refuted in work by McLaughlin, who shows that households in which only the women is in paid work are the least common, whereas if the male is unemployed, the women is much more likely to be as well (McLaughlin, 1986).

She also puts paid to another myth, that, in the words of the popular Derry song,

"the men on the dole played a mother's role"[12]

Male unemployment appears to make little difference to the sexual division of labour in the household. This result was supported by a more recent study for the EOCNI (Campbell et al, 1990).

The pre-war pattern was of much greater dependence by married women on the male wage in Britain and Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland marriage bars kept women out of the labour force much later than in Britain, while the relative security and high pay of Protestant males allowed their wives to remain outside the paid labour force. This pattern has shifted in recent years, with increasing

participation of women, particularly Protestant women. Labour force participation is greatest among women married to men in full-time jobs, and two income families have been increasing in Northern Ireland. But Catholic males have the highest male unemployment rates in the UK, and the majority of their wives are unemployed (McWilliams, 1991). Thus the patterns of female participation reinforce the trend to increasing inequality, which has both a religious and a gender dimension.

e) The process of employment restructuring has religious and gender implications. The identification of skilled jobs as male as well as Protestant may mean that Catholic women are not seen as posing the same threat to Protestant males as would Catholic men. As the managing director of one private firm put it, he could "get away with employing Catholic women but not men".[13]

f) The sectarian divide weakens the women's movement, and therefore the development of strong campaigns for women's equality. Divisions along lines of ideology, class, and ethnicity are not unique to Northern Ireland: the difference is that the sectarian divide overrides all others, so that instead of being able to develop a common programme, which recognises sectarianism and incorporates a strategy to struggle against it, the issue is treated as too difficult to handle, as 'divisive' and 'sensitive'. Attempts are generally made to ignore it. But sectarian divisions constantly appear and shatter this fragile unity.

Increased activity by Republican women in the 1970s and late 1980s led to significant developments towards more feminist perspectives in their political programme. But this activity tends to become dissolved into organising support for male relatively (such a around the hunger strikes) and to lose much of its independence. This activity also separates them from non-Republicans, and so yet again community loyalties are counterposed to loyalty to other women.

The State and the Economy

The relationship between the state and sectarianism is the major political issue in Northern Ireland. But in attempting to unravel this question, a series of problems arises. The term state is used to mean many different entities: it may mean the state

apparatus; the Unionist state; the United Kingdom state; the Northern Ireland state. It is not always clear which is being referred to.

The 'reformability/irreformability' debate centres on whether the *Unionist* state can be seen as separate from the Northern Ireland state as an entity. The position of Bew and his co-authors (1980) is that

> *"the unreformability of the Unionist State .. does not prove that a national question still awaits resolution. That state .. was incompatible with the ending of sectarian discrimination and oppression of Catholics is clear. What is not clear is that any state structure in the North would be incompatible with equal rights for Catholics" (p169).*

Therefore for them the border is irrelevant and working class unity within Northern Ireland is the way forward. For anti-imperialists, the existence of Northern Ireland remains an insuperable barrier to unity. The relation between sectarianism and the state structures under Stormont have been discussed in great detail, while less has been written about the implications of Direct Rule.

The analysis has implications for Britain's role in Ireland. If, as Bew et al claim, the Unionist state was the problem, then Britain, having abolished Stormont, can play a progressive role in reforming the state structures. If on the other hand the present boundaries are the problem, then Britain's role in defending these borders becomes part of the problem, and British withdrawal the key to change.

State Theory

State theorising is notable for its abstractness (Jessop, 1990). Part of the problem is that there is little agreement about what the state actually consists of, and the inclusiveness of the definition depends on the theoretical position taken. Just what is comprised in the definition is not always clarified in theoretical accounts.

There are three very broad groups of ideas about the relation between the state and the economy with which I shall be concerned: the state in conventional economic theory (by which I mean Keynesian macroeconomics and the micro economics of welfare which formed the basis of mainstream economic theorising before the rise of neoliberalism); neoliberalism; and Marxism. Most work on the state in the 1960s and

1970s was in the Marxist (and radical) tradition. The key concern was the relation between the state, capital accumulation and the capitalist class, and reflects the inseparability of the political and the economic in this version. The neoliberal view of the state has gained ground in the past two decades.

Most economic analysis of Northern Ireland falls into the first category (for example Canning et al, 1987; Harris, 1990). The theory of the state is implicit rather than explicit, with more attention paid to the impact of state policy than to the nature of the state itself. This results from the separation of the 'economy' from other areas of social life in economic theory. A 'class mediation' model assumes a given set of property relations, whose interests are seen as 'above' society. This presents a benign view of the state, whose role is to act in the interests of society as a whole.

In the Keynesian version, the state plays a major role through fiscal policy in overcoming the chronic tendency of the market system to stagnation. The problem is primarily the technical one of maintaining demand at an appropriate level. At the micro level the state again acts to clear up problems of 'market failure'; in this case externalities, the inadequate supply of 'merit goods' and so on. There is no coherent view of the state; indeed, much model building assumes 'no government intervention' with the state making an appearance only when things go wrong.

The state then is a neutral instrument, external to the economy. This underpins economists' self-image of essentially neutral technocracy. It also presumes that state intervention will be socially beneficial. The massive extension of spending throughout the advanced capitalist countries in the post-war period took place when this thinking was largely unchallenged.

The neo-liberal version has underpinned the economic policies of the current British Conservative administration. Because of the political situation in Northern Ireland, these policies have been applied later, and more selectively than in Britain.

The basis of this view of the state lies in the work of Hayek and Friedman. From different methodologies, both argue that state spending, other than the minimum necessary to maintain the rule of law, undermines individual liberty. Liberty is associated with negative freedoms, based on the individual's right to dispose of his (sic) own property, and to engage in unfettered market exchange. Inequality is due to individual failure. In order to reach the goal of a competitive market system, however,

some theorists argue the need for a 'strong state' to break monopoly elements such as trade unions. Friedman himself advised the military government of General Pinochet in Chile after the 1974 coup. Neoliberal economic thinking in Britain and the United States has been associated with conservative family values (Levitas, 1986) and authoritarianism (Gamble, 1988).

These versions share a view of capitalism as essentially harmonious, without irreconcilable conflicts. The state, in its benign or malign forms is not theorised as having structural relations with dominant class (or non-class) interests. Neither the Keynesian nor the New Right theories are therefore capable of dealing seriously with issues of sectarianism and the state.

Marxist State Theory

In Marxist theory, the state is not neutral, but a central instrument for maintaining class rule. It takes a specific form in capitalist society; its role is to reproduce the conditions for capital accumulation. But according to Jessop there is

"no well-formulated coherent theory of state in the classic (Marxist) texts" (ibid, p29)

Fragmentary, and often mutually contradictory, ideas contained in the classic texts have been developed into competing theories. The view of the state as the 'instrument' of the ruling class dominated until the 1960s. Marx and Engels' description of "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (1973, p44) had been developed via Lenin's Imperialism into the monopoly capitalist state theory of Stalinist orthodoxy. The New Left critique of Stalinism in the 1960s brought a reworking of state theory, with the Althusserian structuralist school, which rejected crude instrumentalism. Poulantzas viewed the state as a series of complex social institutions, in which class struggle is reproduced. The state became widened to include not only the coercive apparatus and the executive, but such institutions as the Church, schools, social work departments. The state has an "objective function to perform in maintaining social cohesion so that accumulation can proceed" (Poulantzas, 1973, pp44-50). Poulantzas also developed the notion of the 'relative autonomy' of the state from capital. Gough (1979) criticised this view for underestimating class struggle. He sees the development of the welfare state as not only functional to capitalism (in

helping to reproduce an educated workforce) but the result of successful working class struggle.

Gramsci had argued that class domination was secured through force (the coercive apparatus) and ideological hegemony (mobilisation of the 'active consent' of the dominated groups) (Jessop, 1990, p51). The notion that the ideological hegemony of a power bloc involves mutual self-sacrifice has implications for Unionist bloc (ibid, p42). This concept has underpinned some of the more theoretical work on the state in Northern Ireland (Bew et al, 1979).

The regulationist school (Aglietta, 1979; Lipietz, 1987) has analysed the relation of the state to the economy in different periods of capital accumulation or 'modes of regulation'. Jenson (1989) argues that while formally recognising the importance of political action, regulationists have in practice concentrated on economic processes. The actual periodisation of US capitalism on which Aglietta based the development of his concepts is problematic (Brenner & Glick, 1991). In its British version, regulation has become entangled with utopian versions of 'Post Fordism' (Marxism Today, 1988) with reactionary political conclusions (Clarke, 1990; Levidow, 1990). But this is not a necessary result of this conceptual framework (Barbrook, 1990) and the notion of Fordism can provide a useful tool (see below).

Jessop's definition of the state embodies both a recognition of state institutions and state discourse (or hegemony).

> *"The core of the state apparatus comprises a distinct ensemble of institutions and organisations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society in the name of their common interest or general will." (p341).*

But he qualifies this in a number of ways, some of which are particularly relevant to the Northern Irish context:

> *"The boundaries and identity of the society are often constituted in and through the same process by which states are built" (p342).*

Other theories tend to ignore this question of how the boundaries of the state themselves can be politicised, or as Luhmann suggests, "state formation can be understood in terms of the territorialisation of political dominance." (Jessop, p 350). This is crucially significant to the Irish debate.

Jessop goes on to qualify the notion of 'common interest'

> *"..whatever the political rhetoric of the common interest or general will might suggest, these are always 'illusory'" (p342).*

This is true in the Northern Ireland case, but the relevant 'common interest' here is the Unionist bloc. The Northern Ireland state has never operated in a consensual framework which included Catholics as full members of society. It is the all-class Unionist alliance which claims a common interest for all Protestants.

Jessop criticises most state theory for operating with a limited view of class struggle, in which classes other than those based on capital and labour, and other social forces are excluded. While he argues that these - including religious ideology in Northern Ireland - are "critical to an understanding of the nature of state power in particular societies" (ibid, p41) he does not develop this analysis concretely. But the notion of a hegemonic project can help to illuminate this issue.

Hegemony and Sectarianism

For Gramsci's, hegemony involves the

> *"organisation of different 'class-relevant' forces under the 'political, intellectual and moral leadership' of a particular class" (Jessop, pp207-8).*

But to be successful, hegemony must be pursued through a concrete hegemonic project, involving mobilising support behind a national programme which

> *"asserts a general interest in the pursuit of objectives that explicitly or implicitly advance the long-term interests of the hegemonic class (fraction) and which also privileges particular 'economic-corporate' interests compatible with this programme. Conversely, those particular interests which are inconsistent with the projects are deemed immoral and/or irrational and, in so far as they are still pursued by groups outside the consensus, they are also liable to sanction. Normally hegemony also involves the sacrifice of certain short-term interests of the hegemonic class (fraction) and a flow of material concessions for other social forces mobilised behind the project. It is thereby conditioned and limited by the accumulation project" (ibid, p208).*

The distinction between a hegemonic project and an accumulation strategy allows for the possibility of contradiction between the needs of capital and the stability of the

hegemonic bloc, and for 'crises of hegemony' arising from the need to restructure the state when accumulation becomes restricted. Such a crisis could be said to have occurred in Northern Ireland in the 1950s when the accumulation strategy, upon which the material privileges of Protestants was based, had become exhausted.

In Britain, the post-war social democratic settlement rested on 'one-nation' hegemony, an inclusive ideology built on economic expansion, Keynesianism and welfarism. This was replaced in the 1980s with the exclusionary two-nations project of Thatcherism: increased personal incomes for the majority at the expense of a massive underclass of low paid and unemployed. Part of the ideological backing for this has been appeals to ideas of race, nation, and family.

In Northern Ireland, hegemony has always been of a 'two nations' kind, based on sectarianism and the exclusion of Catholics.

Poulantzas argues that the coupling of individual citizenship with the nation state, by suggesting that all are equal political subjects, is effective in maintaining the notion of a common national interest. But in Northern Ireland, citizenship has always been politicised. The creation of the state itself was contested, while discrimination and gerrymandering excluded Catholics from full citizenship, including voting rights. The notion of a 'national interest' united Protestants in defence of 'their state', to which the Catholic population were seen as disloyal. As O'Dowd points out,

> *"Most liberal and social democratic states attain some degree of legitimacy...by 'partitioning' the apparatuses of repression... from other state institutions." (O'Dowd, 1980, p20)*

Sectarian use of coercion by Unionists undermined the notion of neutrality, and the state's monopoly of legitimate violence, legitimating alternative sources of violence in the eyes of many Catholics.

The conflation of the state with Protestantism serves to hide its class nature. Religious exclusion has prevented independent working class activity. The Protestant working class acquired its 'material benefits' through sectarian allocation of jobs and housing, rather than general welfare provision. The welfare state when it appeared was imposed from Westminster, not a product of internal struggles. Bew et al (1980) argue that

"the pre-1972 state in Northern Ireland was in many respects an ordinary bourgeois one... (with) .. the character of the bourgeois state as the site of the operation of specific bourgeois strategies, operationalized by the leaders of specific parties to secure specific bourgeois political objectives" (pp154-5).

They are right to emphasise the class character of the state. But to argue that all bourgeois regimes maintain power by strategies to divide the dominated classes does not tell us anything about the possibility of building a specifically working class programme within that structure.

The Unionist State v the NI State

If the Unionist cross-class bloc was maintained through control of the state apparatus at Stormont, what are the implications of the abolition of this regime ? Does Direct Rule mean that the objective basis for sectarianism has been destroyed ? This is the argument that Bew et al appear to make in the statement quoted at the beginning of this section. In a later work they concede that

"..the unintentional effects of British policy have been to exacerbate conflict between Catholics and Protestants." (Bew et al, 1985, p3)

But to suggest that Northern Ireland under Direct Rule is 'reformable' raises a number of questions. It implies firstly that the British ruling class has no interest in maintaining divisions, or that it would be capable of transforming the apparatus of sectarianism without damaging its own interests. Whyte argued that

"The hegemony of the unionist class alliance, though embedded in the local social formation, depended on the British connection. Insofar as the alliance still exists, or is in the process of transformation, the impetus and support comes from the British state." (Smyth, 1980. p42)

Furthermore, the state's ability to overcome these divisions is limited, although the

"problem of sectarianism, the motor of politics under Stormont, becomes a technical problem to be manipulated" (but the state cannot be neutral) "In its main objective of assuring the accumulation of capital it must depend upon a complex system of class alliances.." (ibid, p44)

A similar argument is made by O'Dowd. The view of monopoly capital as 'reforming' was based on the invalid separation of discrimination from the economic base, which

failed to see sectarianism as embedded in the material structures of the state. Thus the analysis of O'Dowd and his co-authors shows that sectarian divisions are being recreated within the new state apparatus

> *"The British 'reforms' introduced after 1968 implicitly sought to detach sectarianism from class relations. To fundamentally reform sectarian division however, would be to transform class division - an impossibility for a capitalist state." (O'Dowd, 1981, p24).*

While some employment practices have been reformed, the fundamental sources of unequal power, the ownership of capital and the control over the security forces, have not been touched. Fundamental reform would imply that sectarian divisions can be separated from other social divisions, so that they could be eradicated while leaving everything else intact. But

> *"In Northern Ireland sectarian division is a material reality... It is not merely an overlay on class divisions to be seen as something which is either more or less important than class. ... Class relations in Northern Ireland were only experienced as sectarian class relations"(ibid, p25).*

Finally, this view suggests that the boundaries of the state have no implications for the form it takes, in particular for sectarianism. But as Jessop pointed out 'the boundaries and identity' of the state are inseparable. This is particularly appropriate to Northern Ireland whose boundaries have been extremely politicised. The border was drawn with a very precise purpose, to ensure the largest possible area which could be held permanently under Unionist control (see Chapter Three). According to O'Dowd,

> *"It is not the struggle over the territorial extent of the state per se which denies the state its legitimacy... The Border is the over-arching manifestation of hundreds of internal sectarian boundaries which designate Protestant and Catholic space." (ibid, p27)*

British policy since Partition has prioritised the maintenance of the border. The entrenched Unionist majority ensures that Unionists win almost all elected offices and continue to speak for Northern Ireland. This confers a legitimacy to the border which, given the restrictions on serious debate on Ireland in the British media, is easily accepted in Britain. O'Dowd concludes that

> *"Historically the state in NI has depended for its separate existence on sectarian class divisions. Forms of political management have been altered as these divisions and the state itself have been reshaped in response to new forms of capital accumulation and the emergence of new political structures in Britain" (ibid, p207).*

Patriarchy and the State

The role of the Northern Ireland state in maintaining sectarianism has been the major focus of debate. Little attention has been given to the gendered nature of these state structures.

Pateman made an important critique of liberal and Marxist state theory by showing how the definition of the boundaries of the state were built on a "fraternal contract" (Pateman 1988). The apparently genderless citizen was in fact male, since the 'social contract' of citizens is built on a sexual contract embodying women's subordination. The issue of gender,

> *"formally excluded from the discourse of state theory, is nevertheless present under the surface" (Connell, 1990, p 511).*

This dualism parallels the treatment of the 'genderless' individual and the 'family' in economic analysis. Feminist state theory is itself relatively underdeveloped. Mies has a rather untheorized view of the state as an instrument of patriarchal power (Mies, 1986); Barrett (1980) on the other hand writes of the state working through the family to maintain familial ideology, but she sees this primarily as a means of maintaining the stability of capitalist social relations, rather than representing patriarchal power as such. Walby tries to connect patriarchy and capitalism at the level of the state: the "state is gendered - patriarchal as well as capitalist" (1990, p150), but she does not take the discussion much further than this. Connell argues that

> *"gender is a collective phenomenon, an aspect of social institutions as well as personal life.. internal as well as external to the state." (Connell, p509)*

which needs to be theorised at the level of the state. His theoretical framework raises a number of issues which are relevant to Northern Ireland, not just in terms of gender, but in relation to sectarian divisions. The state he argues

> *"is constituted within gender relations as a central institution of gendered power...(and) is a bearer of gender...each state has a definable 'gender regime'" (p519).*

This gender regime appears in

a) a **gendered division of labour** within the state apparatus, with the elite and the coercive apparatus dominated by men, and women concentrated in 'caring' roles. The division of labour in Northern Ireland is also sectarian, with Protestants and Catholics taking the male and female roles respectively.

b) a **gendered structure of power** in the state apparatus and among elected representatives. Here again male power is also Protestant power.

c) a **structure of cathexis or emotion.** I referred above to the gendered imagery of Protestants and Catholics, and its connection to domination and subordination. Mies notes how nationalist movements take on male identities on achieving power

> *"In this phase, the female image of the nation, found on the revolutionary posters.. is replaced by the images of the founding-fathers: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, Mugabe.. Typically, among this gallery of social patriarchs, there are no women" (Mies, 1986, p199).*

Connell also states that "(t)he state has a major stake in gender politics" (p 530) noting that feminist activity has been met not by a counter-mobilisation of men but of the right and the Church, with women often the most vigorous defenders of patriarchal power. Gender subordination acquires ideological hegemony among the subordinated group. This legitimacy is not paralleled by Catholic support for sectarianism, but gender subordination plays an important role in defining group identity.

While the state is traditionally regarded as having the monopoly of legitimate violence, feminists have pointed to the family as an arena of legitimised male violence. Although the "state sets limits to the use of personal violence" (Connell, p527) in Northern Ireland the exclusionary hegemonic project which has denied full citizenship to Catholics has created other forms of legitimate violence. This is primarily directed against the state, and has widespread support from women as well as men in the Catholic community.

Arms are concentrated in male hands. Goldring (1991) claims that this provides another means of control over women, although he does not provide any direct evidence of the use of weapons in this way. The issue of domestic violence is also made more complex because of the Catholic community's distrust of the police. McLaughlin (1986) found that many women who suffered domestic violence in Derry preferred to seek refuge in

a Church run hostel, rather than moving outside their own community, even though Church activity was directed towards ensuring that women did their Christian duty and returned to violent husbands.

Finally, Connell states that "(t)he state's position in gender politics is not fixed", suggesting that the decline of patriarchal institutions (such as the Church) reduces the legitimacy of inequality (for example in work). In Northern Ireland the role of the Church is much stronger than in other European countries, or Australia where Connell is based. But equal opportunities policies and state-sponsored Fair Employment, however limited, do pose challenges to the legitimacy of the sectarian divide, on which the state has rested.

Very little of the existing feminist literature on the state explicitly attempts to incorporate questions of ethnic or national identity. There are exceptions (Kandiyoti, 1991; Anthias & Yuval Davis, 1989). But although their studies provide new insights into a number of concrete cases, their relevance to the Irish case is limited.

Conclusion

In Northern Ireland, sectarianism has been integral to the structures of the state, but so also has patriarchy. While much less has been said about the latter, the two have been mutually reinforcing. The exclusion of Catholics from state power has empowered the Church in both communities as a focus for their 'common interests'. Whereas secular state forms have taken on the task of social reproduction in most of Europe, in Northern Ireland the Churches, with the conservative and authoritarian attitudes to sexuality and the family, continue to play a major role.

The following chapters will examine the way in which state policies have developed, and explore in more detail the ways in which sectarianism and patriarchy have interconnected and reinforced divisions in the state, in work and in the family.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. The two academics who wrote the *Obair Report* on Unemployment in West Belfast were publicly denounced as Sinn Fein supporters by the Minister, Richard Needham. A United States journalist who wrote

a sympathetic piece on the report received telephone calls the next day from both the Northern Ireland Office and the office of the British Labour Party's Northern Ireland spokesperson, warning him not to be taken in by "republican propaganda". (Information supplied by Bill Rolston).

2. Sinn Fein opposes the British 1967 abortion act becoming law in Northern Ireland, in spite of campaigns by women supporters in support of abortion rights.

3. In a study of the clothing industry for the EOCNI, McLaughlin & Ingram discuss the informal criteria for promotion to supervisor's posts: "A person is likely to find another person who is similar to him or herself, culturally, politically and in terms of gender, the most 'acceptable'" (p 38). One of the authors confirmed to me that 'culturally' here meant religion.

4. Kevin Sweeney, (Department of Finance and Personnel) speaking on the Northern Ireland income and household expenditure surveys, Conference on *Statistical Sources for Local and Regional Development*, Queen's University, Belfast, 3rd April, 1992.

5. See for example *Disturbances in Northern Ireland: Report of the Cameron Commission* (HMSO, London, 1969 Cmd 532) which marked the first official British recognition of discrimination.

6. Interview with Bob Cooper, 2nd April, 1992

7. See for example the self-criticism by Barrett & McIntosh (1985) in *Feminist Review*; editorial statement in *Critical Social Policy*, (1987) no 19.

8. See *Fair Employment in Northern Ireland: Code of Practice*, (Department of Economic Development, 1989, pp12-13)

9. Interview with Information Officer of Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland (EOCNI)

10. See for example cases quoted in Rolston & Tomlinson, 1988, pp65-67

11. Catholic men are approximately two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than Protestant men. The equivalent differential figure for women is less than two.

12. From *The Town I loved so Well*, popular Derry song.

13. Reported by Bob Cooper; interview, 2.4.1992.

The Rise and Fall of Stormont

Introduction

With the creation of the Stormont regime in 1920, class, gender and sectarian domination became institutionalised in the apparatus of the state. While its roots can be traced to the seventeenth century, partition was by no means inevitable. It was a product of the balance of class and national interests in Britain and Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century.

This particular resolution of sectarian and class conflict has out-lasted the expectations of many of those involved in its creation, and its long survival has led many social scientists to treat the Northern Ireland state as 'given'. But the continued struggle over the legitimacy of partition makes it essential to examine its historical roots.

> *"Irish history has been, and continues to be, an area of debate and contestation.....because of the abiding manner in which populist nationalist, and Unionist/loyalist, versions of Irish history continue to be used to legitimize current political positions" (Hutton & Stewart, 1991, p1).*

This is reflected in the *anti-imperialist/revisionist* controversy. In the South, this debate has a rather different dynamic, in which the 'nationalist' view of history is contested as part of a continuing struggle over the identity of Irish nationhood. As the Republic strives to become a modern industrial nation, for many - on left and right - the preoccupations of nationalism are seen as belonging to the past. Chief among the embarrassing remnants of nationalism is the verbal commitment of all major parties to Irish unity.[1]

But the Republic[2] is as much a product of partition as Northern Ireland, while its character has been of major importance in forming Protestant views of Irish nationhood, and reinforcing partitionist sentiment.

As revisionist history attempts to change the discourse of Irish history, feminist historians are beginning to develop their own critique. Most of the literature on both sides of the nationalist debate has assumed that the key actors were male. (see for example Farrell (1980); Lee (1989); Cullen (1972)). But the history of Irish women

> *"is not just the history of the oppressed 'other' living in a separate dimension as one might have supposed from ... reading the traditional textbooks in Irish history ... Their lives are firmly connected to, and dictated by, the political, social, demographic and economic happenings of the time. They are part of history, not on the fringes of it" (Luddy & Murphy, cited in Hutton, p3)*

Furthermore, according to Mary Cullen,

> *"History within a patriarchal paradigm is the history of patriarchy, in which most men as well as women are left out."*[3]

Nationalist history has generally made its obeisance to two 'great women', Maud Gonne and Constance Markievicz. But there has been little discussion of the position of women in general in the nationalist movement, or the relation between the nationalist movement and struggles for women's rights. The activity around the suffrage movement at the turn of the century for example have largely been ignored by historians (Cullen Owers, (1990). While partition has been denounced for its betrayal of Republican aspirations, and for the defeat it represented for the working class (see eg Beresford Ellis, 1985), the implications for women's position have been much less to the fore.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to make a detailed evaluation of these historical debates. The purpose of this chapter is to provide some of the historical background necessary to an understanding of social divisions in present day Northern Ireland. The main concern is to examine how sectarianism has intersected with class and gender divisions at different periods, both in the formation of the Stormont regime, and in its 50 year existence.

The first section discusses the origins of partition, and traces the development of the divisions which led to the formation of the Stormont regime. While this work is about Northern Ireland, the character of the state is a product of events in Ireland as a whole. This section will therefore be concerned as much with the South as with the North.

The second section concentrates on the Stormont regime itself, and the reasons for its downfall. It examines the nature of the Stormont state, and the contradictions which developed at the political and economic level: in particular the contradiction between a state structure built on a 'two nations' project based on an all-class alliance within the Protestant community which excluded Catholics from full citizenship; and the crisis in the traditional process of accumulation which necessitated economic modernisation. It is argued that women's oppression and sectarianism have been mutually sustaining within the Northern Ireland state.

The Rise of Stormont

The Development of English Rule

Ireland became England's first colony in 1170, but it was with the development of capitalism in Britain that the economic subordination began which was to transform Irish life. This period also laid the foundations for the separate development of the North East, although it was not until the nineteenth century that the separate identities of the two part of Ireland became thoroughly established.

For almost four hundred years after the English invasion Irish life "beyond the Pale"[4] went on more or less as before. Sporadic revolts were repressed, but Ireland was never totally subdued; the conquerors intermarried with the natives becoming absorbed into Irish society.[5] But as Ireland became more rebellious, the English Crown planned the thorough suppression of its troublesome neighbour on the pretext that it was a potential base from which England's enemies could invade.

The 'plantations' were aimed at replacing the Irish with English settlers loyal to the Crown. Beginning in 1536 under Henry VIII, they continued for over a century. English policy was "to keep Ireland in a state of division and strife" (Marx & Engels, (1971). But Plantation was only partially successful. Settlers did not come forth in sufficient numbers to displace Irish people from the land. The main 'undertakers' included City Companies, who acquired huge land holdings (Beresford Ellis, 1985). Their interest was not in colonisation, but in gaining quick profits. They were only too willing to allow Irish peasants to pay rent for the right to continue to till their land. Settlers in the South and West never became more than a "thin upper crust of landlords and administrators"

which meant that "settler native conflicts were also class conflicts" (Rowthorn & Wayne, 1988, p18).

The difference took on a religious dimension after the Reformation in England and Scotland. Settlers were now Protestants, while the Irish remained Catholic.

As England experienced the long disintegration of feudalism and transition to commercial farming, semi-feudal relations were established in Ireland. Although the formal position of tenant farmers in the two countries was similar, the social reality was vastly different (Strauss, 1951). In Ireland a class of absentee landlords was created, whose primary concern was with the amount of rent they could extract. An elaborate system of sub-letting developed: the smallest tenant-farmers worked tiny plots to produce their own food (mainly potatoes), but they had to engage in wage labour for larger farmers to pay rent. Since they produced their own subsistence, wages could be pushed to minimal levels, as low as 4d to 8d a day during the seventeenth century (ibid). Larger tenants earned rent through producing export crops. Ireland's land system became inextricably bound to the commercialisation of agriculture, but commercial activity was parasitic on producers. Marx describes the position of the small farmer:

> *"What he pays to the landlord for his lease often absorbs not only a portion of his profit, i.e. his own surplus labour, which he has a right to as the owner of his own instruments of labour, but also a portion of the normal wage, which he would receive for the same amount of labour under other conditions. The landowner, moreover, who does nothing at all here to improve the soil, expropriates from him the small capital which he incorporates into the soil for the most part by his own labour" (Marx, 1976, p763)*

Commercialisation undermined self-sufficiency, while acting as a barrier to increased productivity. Petty estimated that in 1670 rent on Irish land was £800,000, approximately 20% of annual income (Strauss). In addition, peasants paid taxes to maintain the imperial presence which enforced this system, and for the Established Anglican Church to which they did not belong (Strauss p15). The system encouraged a network of middlemen and usurers. The exactions of landlords and other parasitic classes frequently necessitated naked force, so the interests of these classes were bound to British rule.

Ireland's became an "agricultural province of England" (Marx & Engels, 1971), also supplying food for slaves in the lucrative triangle trade. But where the interests of Irish merchants conflicted with England's commercial interest, Ireland's trade was

suppressed. Export of cattle was barred in 1666, butter and cheese in 1681. Farmers turned to wool production, but this too was prevented, by banning exports firstly to England, and to third countries in 1699. Many other products were restricted by similar legislation (Perrons, 1978). Navigation Acts suppressed the growth of Irish shipping by stipulating that all trade with the colonies had to use English ships.

The Penal Laws limited Catholics' right to inheritance and the acquisition of property and allowed the confiscation of property for petty offences (Crotty, 1986). While the effectiveness of these laws in transferring land has been questioned (Cullen, 1968, p113), they undoubtedly underpinned dispossession and contributed to the underdevelopment of agriculture.

But the Penal Laws helped to strengthen the hold of the Catholic Church: barred from landholding and the professions, better off Catholic men turned to commerce and the priesthood. The number of priests increased and they became authority figures, particularly in rural communities. By imposing a specifically Catholic grievance, they reinforced the Church's leadership in struggles against English rule. This continued into the nineteenth century, when agitation was first around Catholic emancipation, and later around Home Rule. Catholicism became identified with anti-colonialism, particularly as the Irish language declined, making religion the major badge of Irishness.

Ulster

It was the strength of resistance of the North East province of Ulster which ensured that plantation was carried out most thoroughly there. Following the defeat of the Ulster chieftains and the 'Flight of the Earls', settlement began in 1609 (Darby, 1983). This policy reached its height following the 1641 Rising. The majority of settlers were Scottish Presbyterians or English Anglicans. They were true colonists, who planned to make their lives in Ireland.

Cromwell's original aim was to eliminate the Irish population of Ulster, driving them into the infertile lands of Connaught (Beresford Ellis, 1985). An Act of 1652 made resisters liable to the death penalty. But even this was not sufficient to drive out the Irish. Catholics, without other means of subsistence had no alternative to paying exorbitant rents which squeezed living standards to the barest minimum. Protestant settlers on the other hand needed the inducement of a better level of living than they had left, which

restricted the amount of rent which could be extracted from them. It therefore suited landlords to let their land illegally to Catholics. Protestants farmed the best land, while Catholics were confined to hillier, less fertile areas (Rumpf & Hepburn, pp165-7). To attract settlers, undertakers offered more favourable tenancy arrangements, with some security of tenure, the *Ulster Custom* (Crotty, 1986).

A different set of relations between settler and native was established in Ulster. They were divided between classes as in the South, but also within classes. While their settler status gave Protestants a material advantage, divisions also centred on religion and culture, and their relation to the English conquest. Settlers saw themselves as defending the outposts of British civilisation against the native hordes. This self-image has persisted. The Battle of the Boyne, in which the Protestant King William of Orange defeated the Catholic James II, is celebrated annually by the Orange Order which took its name from William.

Towards the Union

By the end of the eighteenth century Ireland was one of the most highly developed economies in Europe. In spite of the obstacles described above, Ireland had developed a small industrial sector based largely on domestic manufacture. Wool and linen industries prospered throughout Ireland. Linen exports grew from half a million to 40 million yards between 1705 and 1790. Tariffs protected the industry from competition from Lancashire. Cotton was centred on the north, although 20% of production was in the south until the 1820s.

The most advanced development was in the North East. Opinions differ as to the most important factors responsible for creating this lead. The British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO, 1975b) emphasises the role of Ulster Custom in allowing capital accumulation in agriculture, a view challenged by Solow (1972) and Gibbon (1975). But whatever the extent of its positive contribution, Ulster Custom probably protected agriculture from the calamitous Famine of the mid-nineteenth century.[6]

Gibbon (1975) emphasised the settlers' commercial or artisan backgrounds. Tenants supplemented their income through textile production, originally as a cottage industry. The skills they developed were later transferred to factories. Goldring (1991) notes that the expulsion of Huguenots from France in 1685 had given a boost to the linen

industry, since they brought technical skills and marketing experience. Children in Belfast's Poor House were trained in textile production during the eighteenth century, and construction of the City's famous Linen Hall begun in 1784.

During the eighteenth century, the small mainly Protestant industrial class formed a Nationalist Party and began to demand freedom from restrictions on Irish manufactures. They won some legislative independence for the Dublin-based Anglo-Irish Parliament under Henry Grattan, and freedom from most restrictions on Irish industry and trade (Beresford Ellis, p64). But this limited freedom fuelled demands for political independence. Sections of the Protestant commercial and professional classes, influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution found common cause with Catholics. These were mainly Presbyterians, who also suffered disabilities under the Penal Laws. The *United Irishmen*, founded by the Protestant Wolfe Tone, attempted to unite "Catholic, Protestant and dissenter" in a movement for Irish independence (Pakenham, 1972).

But the United Irishmen never won a majority of Protestants. The *Orange Order*, founded in 1795, embodied a different set of values: maintenance of Protestant supremacy and the British connection. The United Irishmen threatened the interests of the landed aristocracy, and the Orange Order organised - through secret societies such as the Peek O'Day Boys - an anti-Catholic movement among the peasantry. They fed off the long-standing animosity between Protestant settler and Catholic, cementing the loyalty of the Protestant tenantry through their relatively privileged status. Opposition to the United Irishmen also came from the newly-proletarianised Protestant linen-weavers of Armagh, who sought protection for their reduced status in the exclusion of Catholics. The clientist relations of landlord-tenant began to be transferred into industrial employment (Perrons, 1978).

The Rising of 1798, led by the United Irishmen, was put down with great ferocity. The Irish Parliament was bribed into accepting the Act of Union of 1800. The Dublin Parliament, like its English counterpart, was composed of men of property, chosen by men of property. Of 300 members, 64 were elected. It was exclusively Protestant. Representing the privileged class, they favoured the preservation of the landed interest and British control in Ireland.

The Act created legislative and economic union with Britain. Irish M.P.s now sat in the British House of Commons. Tariff barriers imposed in the late 18th century were abolished.

The Catholic Church supported the Union on the promise of the repeal of the Penal Laws. But lobbying by Protestant settlers ensured that this promise was not kept until 1829 (Rowthorn & Wayne, p20). Instead of crushing nationalist sentiment, the Union increased it. But while the Republican United Irishmen had been led by Protestants, from now on nationalism became increasingly identified with Catholics.

This was the last time that Northern Protestants were able to play a progressive role on an all-Ireland basis. With the democratic current in the Protestant community defeated, Orangeism became politically dominant. The Protestant bourgeoisie from then on looked towards Britain rather than the South for capital, raw materials and markets, and for political and economic support. The social basis of Presbyterian Republicanism was undermined, precluding any long-term alliance with Irish Catholics (O'Dowd, 1981, p54).

The economic effects of the Union in North and South ensured that material as well as political differences widened. It intensified the uneven development, already evident in the eighteenth century, which a successful independence movement might have moderated. Partition was not an inevitable consequence, but the Act of Union was a crucial turning point in the road towards it.

The Impact of Union

The North East

Industrial capitalism developed rapidly in the North East in growing isolation from the rest of Ireland. The triumph of reaction provided the basis for the transfer of sectarianism into the industrial sphere, as the

> ***"Protestant proletariat tried to re-define the historic 'social contract' which had existed since the Plantation between elements of the Protestant tenantry and their landlords by seeking to forge a specific and advantageous relationship with the new bourgeois masters" (O'Dowd et al, 1981 p7).***

Belfast developed economies in handling and insurance: by 1900 two thirds of Ireland's exports were routed through the city. The city's supremacy in linen was established by the beginning of the century. It superseded cotton as the main industry, employing 21,000 by 1850, and 69,000 at its peak in the 1890s. The industry was based on exports, particularly to the United States. This linked its interests to the Union, both through ties to British mercantile capital, and dependence on imperial trade routes. The North East's separation from the rest of Ireland was sharpened with the development of protectionism in late nineteenth century nationalism (Bell, 1976, p95).

Spinning and weaving continued as mainly domestic activities in the early part of the century as low wages discouraged mechanisation. British textile manufacturers used sweated labour in Belfast to weave yarn (Strauss, p75). It was not until the middle of the century that power looms were introduced. Between 1853 and 1861, 4755 were constructed in Belfast alone. The number of factories almost doubled to 40 in the three years up to 1861 (Goodman, 1991, p 12).

Low wages were partly a product of sectarian divisions. Catholics, driven off the land in the South and West, flocked into Belfast from the beginning of the century. The response of Protestant workers was to exclude them from skilled work. The Iron Moulder's Union founded in 1826; Boilermakers 1841; Amalgamated Society of Engineers 1851 all excluded Catholics and organised their own Orange Lodges (Goldring). As domestic production moved into the factory, these divisions were reconstructed. Sectarian riots, a persistent feature of city life, flared in the 1850s, as Protestant workers asserted demands for privilege within this new setting. These demands became more urgent as the Famine forced more dispossessed Catholics into Belfast (Rumpf & Hepburn, p175). Catholics settled in the West and North of the city, a pattern which still persists. The riots were about both occupational and territorial exclusion.

The Orange Order, once an instrument of the landlords, and for decades almost dormant, was revived as a political force. It became a key instrument for maintaining sectarian divisions in work. Orange Lodges were used to recruit labour, and thus to give Protestants privileged access to employment. The loyalty of Protestant workers was to prove crucial in later political struggles. The landed gentry remained powerful in Ulster while declining elsewhere in Ireland. They allied themselves through the Orange Order with the bourgeoisie.

Mechanisation of the linen industry provided the basis for the development of those other bulwarks of the Ulster economy, shipbuilding and engineering. Both industries were, like linen, heavily dependent on external markets and capital. Harland and Wolff shipyard was founded in 1858. At its height it was the biggest private employer in Northern Ireland, and the largest shipyard in the world. Its name has also been synonymous with sectarian employment practices. In 1866, it employed 225 Catholics out of 3,000 workers (7.5%) and the proportion was still only 7.6% in 1911, while Catholics were 24% of Belfast's population (Farrell, 1980, p16). The sectarian riots which accompanied partition forced most Catholics out of the yards altogether. Goldring notes that the Yard's management condemned the attempted exclusion of Catholic workers in 1864, but condoned it later in the century, as the struggle against Home Rule necessitated a strengthening of the alliance between workers and industrialists (op cit, p64).

By the end of the century, Protestants monopolised skilled labour, while Catholics were almost entirely confined to unskilled work. Although Protestants formed an absolute majority of unskilled workers, their collective image was of skilled labour. Sectarianism corresponded with their daily experience. This also had a gender dimension, as in the textile industry

> *"the jobs of supervision and the maintenance of machinery were held by skilled Protestant men surrounded by thousands of poorly paid Catholic women" (Goldring p60).*

In 1901, Catholics made up a quarter of Belfast's population, and 50% of female spinners; 33% of labourers; 77% of bricklayers; 41% of dockers. But they provided only 6% of shipyard workers and 10% of boilermakers (Goodman, 1991, p13). These patterns persist in the current labour market (see Chapter Six), but while at this time wages in skilled trades were higher than in Britain, and unskilled wages lower (Bell, 1976), both have now moved towards British levels.

> *"As sectarianism depressed wage rates for unskilled labour, full use could be made of cheap female and child labour both in factories and - as much as possible - in the home" (Goodman, op cit p 14).*

The proportion of women in paid work was much higher than in Britain, and the majority were Catholic. A Commission of Inquiry in 1891 found that of the 30,000 workers in textiles, five out of six were women, a tenth of Belfast's entire population. Wages were even lower where women predominated. Another Commission in 1912 found wages

in textiles were less than a penny an hour. Girls started work early, and continued into old age.

> *"My grandmother worked in the mill until she was seventy-three. My mother worked in the mill, and she went to school half-time. She worked from when she was about twelve. You went to school and you worked the other half" (NUPE, 1992, pp79-80).*

This system imposed a heavy toll on young girls. Journalist Robert Lynd, writing in 1909 described how

> *"Vitality is slowly squeezed out of them, and it is hardly any exaggeration to say that from the age of fifteen upwards they die like flies." (cited in ibid, p 80)*

Derry, Northern Ireland's second city, became the centre of the clothing industry, again with a largely female labour force. Like linen, the industry was initially domestic. Factory production begun with the invention of the sewing machine in 1841. By 1867, 2,000 people were employed in seven factories, but were outnumbered by 10,000 outworkers. In 1871, 22,812 women were employed in shirt making in Derry either in factories, or as outworkers in the surrounding rural areas (McLaughlin, 1989). By 1896 there were 20 factories with 10,000 workers. Working hours of were relatively short for the time (51 per week), to allow women to walk from outlying areas (ibid).

The working lives of women in Derry appear to have taken a different pattern from those in Belfast. Mclaughlin (1986) argues that then, as now, the stereotype of the 'female breadwinner' in the Derry clothing factories is largely mythical. The majority of workers were young single women. Their activities were strictly controlled, and their mothers required to act as guarantors. Employment of inexperienced girls did not challenge patriarchal family relationships, which were replicated within the factory. Employment of married women was more problematic. Fears of female domination were expressed by the City establishment. Unemployment resulting from technical progress in the industry was regarded as 'proper' for women, who were not seen as workers in their own right. Women were excluded from the Amalgamated Society of Tailors until 1917. They were not regarded as skilled workers: the skills in needlework which they brought into the factory were seen as 'traditional', and they were not given recognition in terms of wages or status.

There was no significant Catholic merchant or industrial class which could have allied with the Protestant business class. The Catholic middle class consisted mainly of

publicans, and professionals serving their own community: priests, doctors and lawyers. In 1881 Catholics formed 17% of the legal profession in Belfast, and 10% of the medical (Rolston & Tomlinson, 1988, p25).

The interests of the local bourgeoisie were dependent on sectarian working practices, but "UK state policies were relatively autonomous of the interests of both landowners and the middle class in Ireland" (Goodman, p 56). While they did not directly challenge the Orange leaders, who were the main base of support for British rule in Ireland, some British policies did run counter to the interests of this class. The extension of suffrage undermined the landlords throughout Ireland. The Commissions of Inquiry cited above which were a feature of nineteenth and early twentieth century British public life were often critical of aspects of local Unionist rule. An inquiry into the riots of 1864 riots noted that the local state apparatus was openly sectarian, with only one policeman in 30 Catholic (Goodman, op cit).

As sectarianism became entrenched in the North, it divided the economy further from the South. Economic ties to the Empire strengthened dependence on the Union. Unionists were able to unite all classes in the Protestant community against Home Rule, and ensure that no movement for independence could develop on an all-Ireland basis.

The South

The Union acted as a spur to industrial development in the North: in the South, industry was submerged by competition from Britain, while the underdevelopment of agriculture intensified, culminating in the disastrous Famine of the 1840s.

Decline was not immediate. Cotton flourished until the Anglo-American War of 1812-4, when British manufactures, having lost their American market, dumped cotton in Ireland. In 1822, recession further damaged the industry. Cotton workers numbered 3,000-5,000, compared to 30-40,000 in 1800 (Strauss p75), and Southern wool production was reduced to providing only 10% of the Irish market (Cullen 1972).

While nationalist historians blame the removal of tariffs for the decline, others (Johnson & Kennedy, 1991, p15) argue that this was relatively insignificant. For Cullen the crucial event was Britain's industrial revolution which transformed technology and allowed British firms to undercut competitors. But the removal of protection increased

the vulnerability of Ireland's industry (Strauss). The Union not only created a privileged market for British manufacturers in Ireland, it entrenched the subordination of the Irish economy. While a domestic industrial class developed in Ulster, which was able to use the local state apparatus to support its industry, colonial relationships in the South made this impossible.

The Corn Laws, which excluded exports from outside the United Kingdom, gave Irish farmers privileged access to the British market. The Napoleonic Wars pushed prices higher, but the main beneficiaries were landlords, and large tenant-farmers. Rent increases creamed off most of the extra cash. But as grain prices collapsed after the war, rents did not fall in step, and the peasantry was forced into debt.

Large numbers of redundant urban workers were forced back into the archaic agricultural system. Population growth reached unprecedented levels: the 1841 census estimated population at 8 million. Extreme pressure on the land brought further sub-division of plots, while the destruction of the textile industry deprived small tenants of the additional income they had derived from domestic spinning (Johnson & Kennedy p21).

The period saw a sharpening sexual division of labour in agriculture, and women became increasingly marginalised. In the eighteenth century, farm labour had been shared, with women also largely responsible for domestic weaving. The disappearance of this source of income further undermined women's economic status (Rossiter, 1991).

Famine

The Famine increased divisions between North and South. Disease attacked the potato, the main subsistence crop, and by 1846, millions were starving. Though triggered by natural causes, the roots of the Famine lay in the colonial land system.

> *"more than a third of the potato crop throughout the land was gone; in some districts more than half; and at the same time the bulk of the remaining supplies, cattle and corn, butter, beef and pork, which would have fed all the inhabitants, continued to be exported to England to pay the rent of farms which no longer yielded the cultivators their ordinary food. (Duffy, quoted in Speed (1976)).*

The catastrophic results have marked Irish life to this day. Population fell to 5 million by 1851, as 1 million people died of hunger, and others, unable to survive on their land, or evicted for non-payment of rent, were forced to emigrate. Government policy facilitated the transfer of estates to large landlords. Poor relief was confined to people with less than a quarter of an acre of land. The aim was to replace the old land system with capitalist agriculture. But the new landlords were if anything harsher than those they replaced, with no interest beyond securing the highest possible rent. They were speculators, taking advantage of the collapse of land prices to make easy gains, rather than farmers interested in improving the land (Rumpf & Hepburn, p4).

Consolidation of holdings was intensified by the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1847. This opened the British market to grain from more efficient producers. Irish farmers switched to cattle rearing, where transport costs gave them an advantage over imports from further afield. As tillage disappeared, women's economic role was further weakened as men took on the less labour intensive jobs involved in pasture (Rossiter).

Emigration had been common throughout the century, but with the Famine the trickle became a flood. British policy encouraged emigration on the Malthusian principle of absolute surplus population. But the social changes which Famine precipitated, far from creating a new equilibrium population, ensured that the haemorrhage of people became permanent. 'Surplus population' was continually renewed as the gap between Ireland's food production and the ability of peasants to feed themselves widened.[7] Emigration has continued, and population has never again approached its pre-Famine level (Census of Population, various dates).

Britain and Ireland in the Age of Imperialism

The depression of 1870 marked the end of Britain's unchallenged domination of the international economy. Competition grew as Germany, France and the United States developed industrially behind tariff barriers. Better communications reduced the cost of trade and enabled these economies to invade Britain's traditional export markets, while refrigeration allowed trade in food from further afield. Competition for markets and raw materials brought the division of the world through imperial conquest (Lenin, 1982).

The North's ties to the imperial economy increased, while the South's importance to Britain declined. Between 1866-1870 and 1884-8, the value of her exports fell by 25%, bringing renewed conflict between landlords and tenants.

The landlord class in both Britain and Ireland was by now weakened economically and politically. The British industrial revolution had established the dominance of industrial capital. Repeal of the Corn Laws further undermined the landlords, whose incomes depended on high agricultural prices. Manufacturing prospered as extension of the franchise in 1832, 1867 and 1884, (to which the votes of Irish members of the House of Commons contributed (Strauss)) weakened the political power of landlords.

The Irish Land Acts of 1870 and the 1880s - which granted the *Three Fs*: Fair Rent, Fixed Rent and Fixity of Tenure - reflected the decline of this class, as well as successful agitation. The Act of 1881 removed many of the Irish grievances at the time. They also removed the direct material interest of the Anglo-Irish landed class in the Union. Many were happy to be bought out, receiving ample compensation from the British government. The Land Purchase Acts from 1885 completed the process, so that by 1917 almost all land was owner occupied, mainly in 5-10 acre holdings (Strauss, p 199).

The class of independent small farmers created by this process has been a powerful bulwark of social conservatism. The transfer of title to male 'heads of household' and primogeniture further marginalised women in rural areas. Maintenance of the land became central to Irish family life. Men were discouraged from marrying until they inherited from their parents, often in middle age. Marriage became an economic transaction, in which a dowry was common. Many rural men never married.

The army of single women this situation produced found no satisfactory outlet in the country or in the city, where the main occupations open to them were domestic service or shop work. Women's wages were even lower than men's. At Jacobs biscuits factory, one of Dublin's major employers, men's wages were £1 a week, compared with 7-10/- for women.[8] Many sought a more independent life outside Ireland. Between 1885 and 1920, 1,357,831 people emigrated. Just over half (684,159) were women, of which 89% were single, mostly aged under 24 (Rossiter, 1991).

The particularly puritanical and authoritarian nature of the Irish Catholic Church on sexual matters can also be traced to the post-Famine social structure, when celibacy

was rigidly enforced as a means of survival. A Catholic religious revival coincided with Protestant revivalism in the North. This renewed influence of the Churches further divided people North and South (Rossiter; Rumpf & Hepburn).

The material basis for the Union was undermined from two sides: rent, which had been guaranteed by the Union, was declining, while Irish supplies of wage goods to Britain market were becoming less significant. The underdeveloped agricultural system which the Union had entrenched no longer served the needs of either the British or Anglo-Irish ruling class. It was only in Ulster that the landed aristocracy retained political influence through the Orange Order. At one stage they were prepared to support Home Rule rather than submit to the loss of power entailed in the extension of the franchise enacted by the British parliament (Bell, pp97-8).

For most of the century substantial capital sums had been drained from Ireland through taxation, in addition to rent. The exact amount is disputed (Johnson and Kennedy, p19), but a report in 1896 showed that Ireland paid both the full cost of administering the Union, and of the army. It also contributed £2 million per annum towards running the British Empire. However by the end of the century the Tories planned to 'kill Home Rule by kindness' (Strauss, p201) introducing Old Age Pensions and other welfare payments. This created a drain on the exchequer, which was greater because emigration meant old people were a disproportionately large section of the population.

From Home Rule to Republicanism

The independence movements of the nineteenth century were based in the South, and largely rural in membership. The predominantly landlord leadership of the parliamentary Home Rule Parties needed both to mobilise support from the peasantry, and to maintain political control over the movement to avoid jeopardising their own interests. The agrarian question was so tied to the colonial question, that leadership always threatened to move from landlords such as Daniel O'Conell, and later Parnell into the hands of radicals such as Michael Davitt, founder of the Land League. The involvement of the Catholic church helped maintain bourgeois authority over the movement, but it also reduced its attractiveness to Ulster Protestants.

The Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power at Westminster for much of the century, and was able to use the threat posed by the Land League and the Fenians to secure concessions. The Land Acts served to demobilise the radicals.

As the economic advantages of the Union diminished, the idea of Home Rule was accepted by sections of the British ruling class, who saw advantages in handing power to a 'moderate' leadership, which could preserve stability. Dominion status would have given Ireland sovereignty over fiscal matters and reduced Britain's liabilities. But the Home Rule Bills brought in by Gladstone were continually frustrated by a House of Lords dominated by the landlord interest (Dangerfield, 1977).

With the partial solution of the land question, Parnell needed to mobilise another group in support of independence. Ireland's industrial bourgeoisie, although weak, had grown significantly since 1881 (Beresford Ellis) and was influential in the Home Rule movement. Parnell's demand for tariff protection for Irish industry aimed to strengthen this class. But it was against the interests of British industrialists, for whom Ireland was still a significant market, especially as competition from other producers increased. They opposed any settlement which would allow Ireland the right to protect industry.

The demand for economic separation from Britain also threatened capitalists in Ulster. Industry was tied to British and Empire markets, and imperialist conquest and rearmament brought a boom in shipbuilding and engineering. This class had nothing to gain from protection. But successful resistance to Home Rule depended on their ability to mobilise other classes.

Protestant workers had substantial reasons to support the Union. the prosperity of the North East was in marked contrast to the rest of Ireland. Protestant privilege could not have survived an all-Ireland political settlement in which they would be greatly outnumbered: the Union was the guarantee of the ascendancy.

Their standard of living was also tied directly to the Empire. In the abstract one can conceive of an all-Ireland economy in which selective tariffs were applied so that Belfast's industry did not suffer. Politically this was impossible, since Belfast's industry depended on the Empire whose interests were threatened by the demand for tariffs.

Parnell's Home Rule programme, and that of Arthur Griffiths' *Sinn Fein* ('Ourselves Alone') was essentially a programme to develop capitalism in the South. It offered nothing to Protestant workers. On the contrary, it threatened the basis of their relative prosperity without presenting a radical alternative which could unite their interests with those of Southern workers.

Nationalism, Socialism and Feminism

The alternative to this programme was articulated most notably by James Connolly. His vision of an independent Ireland included a radical transformation of property relations in the interests of labour.

The end of the nineteenth century saw the rise of general unions, organising unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The limited industrial growth had delayed the development of trade unionism in the South, but Dublin was a commercial and shipping centre, with significant numbers of dockers and other transport workers. The development of small-scale industry at the end of the century increased the labour force. Irish general unions began as branches of British unions. The most important was the National Union of Dock Labourers, whose Dublin organiser was James Larkin. A series of bitter disputes in which the Irish branch felt let down by the distant London headquarters led to a split. In 1909, Larkin formed the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) and

> *"The Irish Labour Movement was born, with Larkin summing up its philosophy in one phrase, 'The Land of Ireland for the people of Ireland.'" (Beresford Ellis, p183).*

The ITGWU remains the largest Dublin-based union. Larkin's aim was to organise "(t)he whole of unskilled labour in Ireland" (Beresford Ellis, p182), and in 1911, Connolly moved to Belfast to become the Union's organiser. There was intense political and industrial struggle at the beginning of this century, both in the South and in Belfast. The ITGWU organised some successful strikes which united Protestant and Catholic workers. This showed that the support of Protestant workers for their bosses was by no means continuous or unconditional, and the alliance against Home Rule not inevitable.

By the First World War the fragile unity had broken. The working class in the South though militant, was tiny and geographically concentrated. The ITGWU sustained a serious defeat in the 1913 lock-out, when the employers' federation combined to attempt the destruction of the trade union movement. Irish trade unions were too weak to win without material support from British unions, but the TUC condemned the Irish workers and left them isolated. They were bitterly denounced by the conservative wing of the nationalist movement, notably Arthur Griffiths. With trade unions weakened, Protestant workers were more ready to respond to appeals to unite against the threat of Rome Rule. There was

> *"no way that the Republic could win over Protestant workers from communal politics that at least gave them a junior share in Protestant hegemony over Catholics, to the role of victim of exploitation equal to that of Catholic workers, and subject to Catholic as well as Protestant employers" (Lysaght, 1991, p44)*

A Home Rule Bill passed in the Commons in 1912 was opposed by Northern Unionists led by Sir Edward Carson. 218,00 people signed a Solemn League and Covenant, pledging to use "all means necessary" to oppose Home Rule. In 1913 Carson formed the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), an illegal Protestant army. These moves were accompanied by organised sectarian attacks. In 1912, 2,000 Catholic workers were driven from the Belfast shipyards.

The British government ordered its brigade at the Curragh military camp to raid the UVF headquarters and arrest its leaders. The commanding officer refused, and the government agreed to the officers' demand that the Army would not be used against the Unionists. Lenin wrote of these events:

> *"March 21, 1914, will be an epoch making turning point, the day when the noble landlords of Britain smashed the British Constitution and British law to bits and gave an excellent lesson in class struggle" (cited in Beresford Ellis, p 207).*

Rather than take on the Unionists, Lloyd George's government capitulated. A compromise was worked out which for the first time opened up the possibility of partition. With the First World War all progress towards Home Rule was postponed.

The War further cut off Northern workers from their Southern counterparts. An armaments and shipping boom increased prosperity, while political differences over the Empire were bought to the fore. The British trade union and labour movement turned

its back on class politics and internationalism, as did European socialists, further isolating Irish nationalists.

The threat from the UVF led Larkin and Connolly to reform the Irish Citizens Army (ICA), pledged to "the principle of equal rights and opportunities for the People of Ireland and to work in harmony with organised Labour towards that end" (Beresford Ellis, p208). With the Irish Volunteers[9] the ICA organised the 1916 Easter Rising against British rule. A split in the Volunteers brought confusion over the orders to mobilise, and far fewer than planned actually took part. The Rising was swiftly defeated, its leaders, including Connolly, executed.

The brutality of the executions, and the reprisals which followed increased opposition to British rule, while the Rising provided inspiration for the growing Republican movement. But with the death of Connolly the movement lost its most important socialist voice. Connolly's aim of uniting the independence movement with organised labour was destroyed, as the ITGWU and the Labour Party withdrew support from the ICA. From then on the labour leaders abstained from involvement in the national struggle. In the 1918 election at the height of the national revolution, the Labour Party withdrew their own candidates declaring 'unqualified adherence' to the demand for self determination, and their willingness to

> *"sacrifice party interests in the interests of the nation in this important crisis in the history of the nation" (Voice of Labour, quoted in Beresford Ellis, p204).*

The turn of the century had seen an extraordinary ferment of radical activity in Dublin, with women not only taking a leading role in the nationalist movement, but for the first time in Ireland, making demands in their own right, through the suffrage movement.

Women had always been active in the nationalist movement, but the 'Ladies Committees' were excluded from full participation. Women such as the Fenian Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa, active in the 1860s, were often involved through male relatives. They tended to take a supportive role, without raising issues on their own behalf. Family life was accepted unquestioningly as the sphere of women.

"In the Irish nationalist tradition, women have only become politically visible as a group ... when the moment of struggle has allowed the temporary suspension of the cultural norms restricting women's behaviour. Their participation at such moments has had less the character of independent action and more that of sponsorship by the leadership of male-dominated movements." (Ward, 1980, p96)

As the trade union and socialist movements begun to flourish, and the nationalist movement revived, women became involved independently. Many were active in all three movements: socialist and trade union activity; nationalism; and women's rights through the suffrage movement. Helena Moloney, later elected president of the Irish TUC, was one: a well-established actress at Dublin's Abbey Theatre, she played a key role in many organisations.

But the harsh conditions under which the majority of women worked excluded them from political activity. Both Gonne and Markievicz were from privileged, Anglo-Irish families, and Ann Haslam, the Quaker founder of the Irish suffrage movement was from a middle-class background. Moloney was able to support her activity through her earnings in the theatre.

With the separation of the national and social questions, the demand for suffrage came to be seen as competing with the national movement. Most nationalist men were either hostile to women's demands or argued they were marginal to the main struggle. Connolly was unusual in actively supporting the movement and speaking at Suffrage meetings. In 1911 a Bill to grant women the vote was given its first reading in the House of Commons. All 32 Irish MPs voted in favour. In 1912, fearing the loss of the Home Rule Bill, they voted against and it was lost. Suffragist[10] militancy increased, and there were 35 convictions in 1912. The Catholic clergy denounced the women from the pulpit.

The war strained the unity of the suffrage movement, as British suffragettes supported the war effort. It drew a further wedge between nationalists and suffragists: women were expected to put their interests on hold as the national struggle dominated. Some nationalist women even opposed the demand for the vote on the grounds that it was wrong to demand anything from the imperial parliament. Moralism of this kind has been a pervasive feature of Republican politics.

The Irish Volunteers refused to demand the inclusion of women's suffrage in the Home Rule Bill (Ward, 1980, p101). *Cumman na mBan*, the women's organisation of the Irish Volunteers (which became Sinn Fein's women's group) was caught in double bind:

"If nationalist women refused to work for the Volunteer movement until they were guaranteed equal status (as the Irish Women's Franchise League tried to persuade them to do) they felt they would isolate themselves in the emerging new nation... if they sacrificed their own interests and worked hard for independence, some saw clearly that this renunciation would defeat whatever chance women stood of being accepted as partners" (ibid, p102).

Some Northern women were involved in the suffrage campaign, but they were never as active as Southern women (Goldring). The situation in the North was not conducive to women's self-organisation. Women activists in the South generally had relative economic independence. For Catholic women, with their double burden of domestic and waged labour, political activity was difficult. Unionist women were not so hard-pressed in this way, but the conservative influence of Unionism did not encourage independent activity. It was not possible for these women to find common cause with the most progressive elements of the trade union and nationalist movements as happened at the turn of the century in the South. The strains to the movement during the war destroyed the basis for any united North-South campaign.

The marginalisation of both the 'social' and the 'women's question' from the national struggle destroyed any effective challenge to the conservative leadership of Sinn Fein. This has had profound implications for the type of state which was constructed in Ireland.

Partition

At the first general election after the War, in 1918, Sinn Fein won 73 of the 105 Irish seats. The Sinn Fein M.P.s immediately met to declare an Irish Republic. The Proclamation contained a radical democratic programme written by Thomas Johnson, the Labour leader. But the absence from the meeting of some leading Sinn Fein members, including de Valera, suggests that it may not have had universal backing (Rumpf & Hepburn). Certainly there were no moves to implement it.

The Republic was unanimously recognised by both the Irish TUC and Labour Party. The British government sent in troops and irregulars (the *Black and Tans*) to quell resistance, and a bitter guerrilla war ensued. The Volunteers had become the *Irish Republican Army* (IRA). In the North, some of the most brutal violence took place as pogroms were launched against Catholics (Farrell).

The outcome of the War of Independence was stalemate. No side - Republicans, Unionists, the British government - was able to win outright victory. Partition, the first choice of none of the protagonists, marked a recognition of the continuing divisions in Ireland. It allowed the Unionists to strengthen their hold in the North East, while Britain maintained important economic and political powers over the whole island.

The six north eastern counties became Northern Ireland, remaining part of the United Kingdom. The other twenty six counties became the Irish Free State, with Dominion status. The two states were artificial constructions. The principle on which the border was drawn was to give Northern Ireland the largest population and land area over which Unionist rule could be maintained. Northern Ireland is not the historic nine-county province of Ulster. As Lord Cushendon, a leading Unionist politician, lamented:

> *"To separate themselves from fellow loyalists in Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal was hateful to every delegate from the other six counties...but the inextricable index of statistics demonstrated that although Unionists were in a majority when geographical Ulster was considered as a unit, yet the distribution of population made it certain that a separate parliament for the whole province would have a precarious existence" (Bell, p7).*

But had Northern Ireland encompassed only areas where Protestants were a significant majority - Belfast and its hinterland - the new state would not have been economically viable. Catholics made up around a third of the population at partition, concentrated in the West.

Republicans were bitterly divided. The group led by Collins who had negotiated the Treaty, were prepared to compromise in the hope that partition would be temporary. The Boundary Commission set up under the Treaty was expected to cede sufficient territory to the South to make the Northern state unworkable. But for many Republicans this represented a betrayal, and for the left and the labour movement the division of the working class was disastrous.

Partition was welcomed by a war-weary population since it offered at least stability. In the Civil War which raged for two years between supporters and opponents of the Treaty, Republicans were defeated by a combination of British, Free State and Unionist forces. Class divisions within the movement re-emerged as groups of workers seized land and ran farms as communes. The Knock Creamery was declared a Soviet. This action embarrassed the official labour movement, and was opposed by conservative

elements in Sinn Fein (both pro- and Anti-Treatyites) as the movement began to threaten property rights.

With the victory of the pro-Treaty forces the powers of the Boundary Commission, which had been expected to pass Tyrone and Fermanagh to the Free State, were revoked. Under threat of renewed war, Lloyd George forced the Free State government to accept the existing boundaries, and to compensate the British government and the Unionists for the cost of the army during the War of Independence. The sum agreed was £150,000, with an annuity of £250,000 for the next sixty years.

The New States at partition

The Twenty Six Counties

The new Irish Free State was remarkably conservative for a nation emerging from a protracted and bloody struggle for independence (MacDonagh, 1977). Far from taking radical steps to separate the economy from England, let alone to carry out the spirit of the Proclamation and redistribute wealth, the economic policies adopted by the Free State government were a model of British Treasury caution. Social conservatism, was embedded in the institutions of colonial rule which the new regime took over, and in the central role of the Catholic Church.

> *"Against a divided opposition the Irish bourgeoisie united behind the Treaty...This unity had a parallel in the Catholic hierarchy. During the Anglo-Irish war it had not been able to unite .. Now all the bishops moved to support the new settlement" (Lysaght, 1991, p48).*

At partition, few people believed the new state would survive in its existing boundaries. But in waging the civil war the pro-Treatyites were forced to defend the new regime, which inevitably meant defending the boundaries on which its power rested. The border was given further legitimacy when, following the defeat of the anti-Treaty forces, their leader de Valera led his new Party, *Fianna Fail*, into the Dail. De Valera himself became *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) in 1932, and carried out repressive measures against the minority of Republicans who continued a sporadic armed struggle.

Commitment to a united Ireland was enshrined in the constitution, but no major political party had a "credible strategy for achieving this aim" (Rowthorn & Wayne, 1988, p26).

They were obliged to construct a nation state within the Twenty Six Counties. In the name of building the Irish nation, a national identity was forged which separated it further from the Six Counties. Irish nationhood was based on a narrow and inward-looking nostalgia for a gaelic tradition, in which the Catholic church was inseparably linked to Irishness. (Brown, 1981). The church took on many state functions, running the majority of schools, and many hospitals (Phadraig, 1986).

The Church's role in the state was unlikely to make it attractive to Northern Protestants. But conservatism on sexual matters united the two states. In many ways, each was a mirror image of the other, and

> *"Irish women paid the price of a partitioned Ireland, where two mutually antagonistic states adopted ideologies which were religiously orthodox and patriarchal" (Rossiter, 1991, p232).*

The Church view of women prevailed in state ideology, and this

> *"misogynist attitude received its fullest expression in Article 41 of the southern state's 1937 Constitution, which defined the role of mothers as properly belonging to the home" (ibid).*

Although they won the vote, women's involvement in political and social life diminished after partition. O'Dowd suggests

> *"one reason was that it was precisely in these areas that the Churches, notably the Catholic Church, most strongly exerted their authority" (O'Dowd, 1987 pp11-2).*

The 26 County economy was extremely weak at partition. Nearly all the advanced industry was in the Six Counties, and one third of the Irish market and taxable capacity was lost, along with a fifth of the population. The Free State still depended on Britain as a market for her agricultural exports, and a source of manufactured imports. Much of industry was British-owned while British banks dominated the financial sector. The Irish punt was tied to the pound sterling giving little control over monetary policy.

> *"From the 1920s until the 1950s, despite the achievement of political independence from Britain ..... the Republic of Ireland remained an almost classic example of a dependent society" (Wickham, 1986, p74).*

State initiatives did not challenge economic backwardness in the first thirty years. Economic policy was inhibited both by ties of dependence to Britain and fear of

retaliation, and by the conservatism of the new regime (Lee, 1989). The annuities represented a continuing drain on Irish income. Protection did bring some limited development of domestic industry, mainly in low technology consumer goods. Agriculture, based on small individual proprietors remained the mainstay of the economy. The rural economy also reinforced conservatism on economic and social policies.

The reality of the border necessitated the construction of a formal 26 County economy, with separate fiscal and monetary policy. This further reduced economic links with the North. Both economies remained outward-orientated, at the expense of intra-Ireland trade.

Although the border disappeared as a serious political issue, the major parties have their origins in opposing sides in the civil war. Political debate has concentrated on alternative conceptions of Irish nationhood, rather than class. Fianna Fail remains the largest party, losing power only when other parties have formed coalitions. It has constructed hegemony

> *"on an alliance of petit-bourgeois economic nationalism and popular social reform, creating an image of Ireland as 'classless'" (Hazelkorn, 1986, p334).*

Clientist politics have prevented an effective challenge to Fianna Fail through socialist or social democratic politics. Trade unionism is strong, but the Labour Party had until 1993 achieved office only as a junior coalition partner of Fine Gael.

The regime came into crisis in the 1950s. As the rest of Europe experienced post-war boom, the inability of the Irish economy to sustain adequate living standards was reflected in mass unemployment and emigration which drained the country of its younger generation. But Fianna Fail's hegemonic position allowed it to lead the policy changes of the late 1950s, which reversed some of the traditional canon of nationalism (Butler, 1992). Economic policy turned outwards, with a strategy of attracting multinational capital through lavish grants and subsidies.

Perrons (1978) argues that this represented a change of emphasis rather than a substantive change of direction. There was little attempt to direct investment or plan economic development, let alone interfere with property relations. It was essentially a policy of 'dependent industrialisation' (Wickham, 1986), with Ireland taking a

subordinate place in the world division of labour. The policy was relatively successful until the early 1980s, but the limits to a strategy based on cheap labour and resources emerged more sharply as other newly industrialising countries were able to offer these more cheaply. By the mid-1980s, a 'Jobs Crisis' had developed (ICTU, 1984), while tax concessions and grants to multinationals brought mounting debt, which was paid by increasing the tax burden on working people. While state policy has shifted towards a more directed industrial strategy embodying more skill-intensive sectors, the basic structural problems remain.

Industrialisation brought other modernising influences. Social mobility has reduced the importance of the three-generation family. Women, particularly in urban areas, have taken up opportunities to work. A new labour force of young women was also constructed in some rural areas where new multinational factories provided semi-skilled employment (Harris, 1989). Ireland became less insular as communications expanded and foreign travel increased. As the economy flourished, emigrants started to return in large numbers, often bringing less traditional ideas.

But social change has been slow, reluctant and uneven. Social welfare provision was brought in against Church opposition, for whom the 'Mother and Child' proposals (Child Benefit) struck at the roots of Christian family responsibility (Browne, 1986). Again it was Fianna Fail rather than labour which had the power to carry forward these proposals. Other social legislation has been introduced through the EC, of which Ireland is a major beneficiary.

But Ireland remains on the fringes of Europe both geographically and socially, at the bottom in terms of many social indicators (Eurostat). The female participation rate is still very low, and childcare worse than any other EC state. In 1950, Ireland had the lowest marriage rate in Europe, with one in four women and one in three men over 55 unmarried; but while elsewhere marriage has become less popular as couples favour cohabitation, marriage rates in Ireland have increased. Ireland has the highest birth rate and the largest family size in the EC. During the 1970s, population grew at more than four times the EEC average, but population density is the lowest. Net emigration, the product of underdevelopment, has - apart fro a short period during the 1980s, remained a permanent feature.

The rural family retains rigid age and sex roles. Men still marry very late, often waiting till they have inherited. Men still control the farm, with their wives and sons often having little influence over its management (Commins, 1986).

The Catholic church retains unrivalled power in the state. In 1981 93% of the population declared an affiliation to the Catholic church, and 91% of these claim to attend church weekly (Phadraig, p141).[11] No significant political party has ever been overtly anti-clerical, despite the Church's authoritarianism and puritanism (Rumpf & Hepburn, p15). Commins (1986) explains this as the inheritance of colonialism, when the church was seen as mediating on behalf of an underprivileged people.

Catholic idealisation of both Irish motherhood and virginity is only reconciled by rigorously policing extra-marital deviance (O'Dowd, 1987). It is the only country in Europe to ban divorce. Contraceptives are now available, though difficult to obtain in rural areas. A referendum in the early 1980s made abortion unconstitutional under any circumstances.

The recent attempt by the Dublin Attorney General to prevent a 14-year-old girl from travelling to England for an abortion after she had been raped threw into crisis not only the relationship between church and state, but also the project of modernisation through the European Community. The Maastricht Treaty was threatened by anti-abortionists who wanted to restrict the right of pregnant women to travel within Europe for abortions. This forced the major parties to distance themselves somewhat from the Catholic Church, by proposing a new Constitutional amendment which represented a compromise on the abortion issue.[12]

Ireland's economic development has weakened the specific ties to the British economy. British capital is no longer dominant, nor is it the major trading partner (Wickham, op cit). These ties were also weakened when Ireland joined the EC, whose expanding role it has embraced more enthusiastically than Britain. The link of the two currencies was broken in 1979.

Many argue that the national question is largely irrelevant to the South's development. In a recent work, Bew et al argue that to understand Ireland's

"contradictory realities needs .. no plumbing of the depths of '800 years of Oppression'" Bew et al, 1989, p13).

and that Ireland is moving towards

"a long delayed realignment towards a politics based on class, as has traditionally been the case elsewhere in modern Europe".[13]

The success of the Labour Party in the last general election (November 1992) when it won seats at the expense of both traditional parties, was widely seen as marking this transformation in Irish politics. But the bargaining following the election produced a governing coalition in which, although Labour hold more powerful offices than in its previous partnerships with Fine Gael, Fianna Fail remains the leading partner.

Revisionist historians are rightly critical of the conservatism and inwardness of much nationalist thinking in Ireland. But these are a product of a history which includes Ireland's subordination to Britain. Ireland's social, economic and political development remain shaped by the border (see Chapter One). A search for 'pure' class politics is as unrealistic in the South as it is in the North, or indeed in the rest of 'modern Europe'.

The Six Counties

The Treaty gave Northern Ireland a locally-elected administration based at Stormont. The Unionists originally opposed a local parliament, preferring to continue the old constitutional arrangements. But Craigavon, writing to Lloyd George in 1921, agreed:

"As a final settlement and supreme sacrifice in the interests of peace, the government of Ireland Act was accepted by Northern Ireland, although not asked for by her representatives" (quoted in Lyons, 1973, p696).

In the event, they took full advantage of the local state apparatus to secure their control over the Six Counties (Rumpf & Hepburn). The Stormont parliament became responsible for domestic matters such as education, health, housing, and law and order, while the British government retained responsibility for trade, defence and foreign policy.

The financial relationship between Britain and Northern Ireland was complex. Although subordinate to the British government, Stormont had substantial autonomy in spending.

The majority of taxation was paid into the UK Exchequer (Reserved Revenue). From this was deducted the Imperial Contribution, through which Northern Ireland paid for items not under its control (eg the Army, the UK National Debt). The cost of Reserved Services - post office, inland revenue - was also deducted from Reserved Revenue. The balance came under the control of the Stormont government. Stormont also controlled 'transferred revenue', taxes collected directly in Northern Ireland, while local authorities collected rates.

At first Northern Ireland was expected not only to 'pay her way', but to contribute to the British exchequer. But during the 1930s, special payments were made to alleviate the severe unemployment. As late as 1948-9, Northern Ireland was paying £22.5m per annum through the Imperial Contribution, over a quarter of total public spending, and five times as much as spending on education. A total of £262 million was paid between 1920 and 1949 (Ulster Year Book, various years).

Perhaps the most important area of Unionist control was 'law and order', which came under Stormont's Home Affairs Ministry. The state had been created in a bitter war, which after the Treaty settlement turned increasingly to sectarian violence. Hundreds of people - mainly Catholics - were killed; pogroms against Catholic areas forced thousands to flee their homes; thousands more lost their jobs through expulsion and intimidation. Some Unionist politicians openly encouraged violence, while the authorities did little to prevent it (Farrell).

Sectarian violence became institutionalised, as responsibility for security passed to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Special Constabulary (the B Specials), an almost 100% Protestant force, largely recruited through Orange Lodges. At partition, one in five Protestant men carried arms in some section of the security forces. Draconian 'Emergency Powers' were enacted, later made permanent in the Special Powers Act. Its repressive aspects - reportedly the envy of Prime Minister Verwoed of South Africa (ibid) - have been detailed in numerous reports, including later official enquiries (for example the Cameron Commission, 1969; see also Hillyard, 1983).

One Party Rule

Protestants outnumbered Catholics by two to one in the Six Counties, but the majority was concentrated in the area around Belfast. Catholics were a majority in two Western

counties, and in two others the Protestant majority was precarious. Several towns had overwhelming Catholic majorities. In Belfast, Catholics formed a substantial minority, concentrated in the West of the city. In the whole of Ireland, Unionists were a minority of about a fifth.

This demography produced permanent insecurity among Protestants. Unionist leaders played on the twin fears: that Protestants would be swallowed up in the 'Catholic South', and subject to 'Rome Rule'; and that they would lose their majority in Northern Ireland (be 'outbred'). Catholics, the majority of whom had supported Irish independence, were seen as "disloyal". Speaking in Stormont in 1934, prime minister Brooke announced that "Catholics are out to destroy Ulster with all their might and power" (Rumpf & Hepburn, p180). Unionists dealt with "disloyalty" by marginalising Catholics politically, economically and socially. On the other hand

> *"If lasting loyalty to the new state was to develop among the Protestant masses, they had to be given a privileged position within it.... Protestant privilege would effectively prevent the emergence of any working class solidarity.... The Unionists set about constructing an Orange and Protestant state with almost all political power and patronage in their own hands" (Farrell, p81).*

The Protestant majority constructed with the border was reinforced by gerrymandering of local boundaries, and restrictions on the franchise. This helped maintain Protestant control of Stormont and virtually all local councils. In the first local elections, held under proportional representation (PR), 25 of the 80 Councils elected nationalist majorities. Stormont promptly abolished PR, and redrew local boundaries, which produced non-Unionist control of only two councils by 1924.[14] PR for Stormont elections was abolished in 1929.

The most famous gerrymander was Derry City Council (see Chapter One). The boundaries were changed after Direct Rule, giving non-Unionists a majority. One of their first acts was to change the City's official name from Londonderry to Derry, an act of great symbolic significance.

Northern Ireland was effectively a one-party state under Stormont. Abolition of PR meant that the Unionist/Nationalist divide remained the overriding issue in each election. Nationalists could not outvote Unionists on their own, and the Protestant class alliance prevented any substantial challenge to Unionist rule. Unionists never held less than 33 of the 52 Stormont seats. There was remarkable continuity of personnel, with only six prime ministers in the entire 50 years of Stormont, and three in the first 40 years.

Unionist politicians came almost entirely from the landed, industrial and professional classes. During the Home Rule crisis Carson initiated the Ulster Unionist Labour Association in order to gain trade union votes. Three nominees sat as Labour Unionists at Westminster, between 1918 and 1922. But once the state was established, and Protestant loyalty secured, this element disappeared. They never had any influence over Unionist policy-making, and by 1925 working class representation among elected members was almost non-existent (Rumpf & Hepburn p 177).

Catholics tended to abstain from public life in the early days, believing that the state would be unable to establish itself. When they did stand for election, the opposition - various nationalist parties, plus an occasional Labour member - was marginalised at Stormont, and there were frequent nationalist boycotts. The sectarian nature of the contest meant that the result of elections was often a foregone conclusion; 47% of Unionist victories were unopposed.

Unionists had even more control over the twelve Westminster seats. Until 1970, they held at least nine. They played little part there, but on economic and social questions they tended to align themselves with the right of the Conservative Party.

A Protestant State

Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, Lord Craigavon, told Stormont in 1934

> *"All I boast is that we have a Protestant parliament and a Protestant state" (Farrell, p92).*

Stormont's total spending was determined by Westminster. Until parity in service provision was established with the welfare state in 1947, Northern Ireland's spending was constrained by low income (Rump & Hepburn, p172). But Stormont controlled most services, and this power was used to maintain Protestant privilege through access to jobs and services. As Lord Craigavon put it

> *"The appointments made by the Government are made, so far as we can manage it, of loyal men and women." (cited in Rowthorn & Wayne, p33).*

In the Civil Service, only 13 of 209 people in technical and professional grades were Catholic; 23 of 319 in administrative grades; 16 of 115 government nominees to Health

Boards (Farrell, p 91). Employment in the security forces was virtually closed to Catholics.

Catholics were underrepresented in other areas of the public sector, such as the fire and ambulance services, and electricity. All are traditionally skilled male work, highly unionised with strong group identities - the public sector labour aristocracy - and remain Protestant strongholds.

Unionist control of local government also became a self-perpetuating mechanism for marginalising Catholics. This was supported both politically and financially by Stormont: rate revenue made up only around one quarter of local government receipts, the rest coming via Stormont (Ulster Year Books).

Councils controlled the building and allocation of public housing, and since the local government franchise was based on a housing qualification until the late 1960s, this was crucial to retaining power. Unionist members of Omagh Rural Council, which was 62% Catholic wrote to the Unionist whip at Stormont:

> *"We would point out that in certain districts cottages are required by Unionist workers but we hesitate to invite representations as we know there would be a flood of representations from the Nationalist side and our political opponents are only waiting the opportunity to use this means to outvote us in divisions where majorities are close." (quoted in Farrell, p88).*

This fear - and Unionist distaste for public provision - meant that Stormont had a poor record of house building, creating high dependence on private rented accommodation. In 1961, 57% of households in Belfast, and 37% in Northern Ireland as a whole rented privately, compared to 31% in Britain.

The third major aspect of Unionist local government was discrimination in employment: in 1951, Catholics held 11.9% of non-manual posts. This percentage was not evenly spread, for Catholics were overrepresented where they had local control. Some councils employed no Catholics in non-menial work.

Stormont politicians also helped sustain widespread discrimination in private employment. Sir Basil Brooke, MP (later Prime Minister Lord Brookeborough) said in 1933

"There were a great number of Protestants and Orangemen who employed Roman Catholics . He felt he could speak freely on this subject as he had not a Roman Catholic about his own place.....He would appeal to Loyalists therefore wherever possible to employ good Protestant lads and lassies." (quoted in Farrell, p90).

Harland & Wolff was the major private employer, its cranes towering over the Belfast landscape. Together with Short Brothers engineering works, it became a symbol of Protestant supremacy. The pogroms of the 1920s had excluded most Catholics from the yards. By 1970, there were only 400 Catholics among its workforce of over 10,000, mainly in menial positions (Boyd, 1984, p62).

Rowthorn and Wayne summarise the 'mechanics of discrimination' in the private sector: the location of employment was often difficult or dangerous for Catholics to reach; Catholics seeking certain types of employment were unlikely to be hired; Catholics didn't bother to apply to firms known to discriminate; trade unions sometimes acted as hiring agents and barred Catholics; there was often no public recruitment, with hiring through family or the Orange Lodge (ibid, p34).

The dual labour market created in the nineteenth century was further institutionalised under Stormont. Catholics were confined to a narrower range of occupations than Protestants. Unemployment was consistently higher, forcing many to emigrate. Catholic emigrants outnumbered Protestants. This helped maintain political stability, firstly by cutting the official rate of unemployment; and secondly by preventing the natural increase in the Catholic population from feeding into the electorate, and threatening Unionist control. The proportion of Catholics remained roughly the same (34%) throughout the Stormont years. But more than 40% of those under 15 were Catholic, while the proportion fell to 30% for those of working age (Northern Ireland Census of Population).

Education became a major source of conflict. The Catholic Church was determined to maintain its own schools, while Unionist-controlled local education boards insisted that the compulsory religious instruction in county schools was Protestant. A revival of Protestant fundamentalism at partition increased Unionist intransigence. County schools became effectively Protestant, and Catholics opted out of the state system, 98% attending religious schools (Murray, 1983). Until 1967, when Voluntary Aided Status financed religious schools at almost the same rate as county schools, the already poorer Catholic community received a substantially smaller proportion of the state's resources. This was reflected in poorer equipment and teacher-pupil ratios, and lower academic

attainment, which contributed to maintaining low economic status. There are very few religiously mixed schools, which are mainly independent.

A series of Protestant privileges thus stemmed directly from Unionist control of the state apparatus. Protestant separateness was reinforced by social institutions such as the Orange Hall, the Church, Protestant drinking clubs, and sports teams (Donnan & McFarlane, 1983; 1986). The Orange Order was central to the unity of the Unionist Party, and the majority of its MPs were members. It was also the link which bound employers to employees, both through general ties of community, and directly through its role in labour recruitment. Most jobs were not advertised publicly, or filled through official labour exchanges throughout the Stormont years (Gibbon, 1975).

Loyalty to the Unionist Party and the state was preserved, while any tendency for Protestant workers to make common cause with Catholics was discouraged. Hostility to independent politics was demonstrated in 1920, when not only Catholics, but Protestants "in sympathy with the red flag of revolution" (Goldring, 1991, p64) were expelled from the shipyards.

Church, State and Family

As in the South, the Church was a crucial element in legitimising the regime. Protestant churches, unlike the Catholic Church, are not monolithic, but their influence has been as profound in shaping the state. They are authoritarian, particularly in matters of family and sexuality, and their influence has been crucial in cementing sectarianism, and maintaining patriarchal dominance.

> ***"The churches, Catholic and Protestant alike, are male, the difference being that Ian Paisley has a devoted wife who keeps his home-fire burning, whereas the Catholic bishop has servants devoted to his well-being" (Goldring, p73).***

The Protestant churches, with their married clergy

> ***"elevated conjugality over virginity" and "Protestant clergy were more likely to devolve the role of moral guide to husbands and fathers within the family" (O'Dowd, 1987, pp14-15).***

Unionist women are excluded from the all-powerful Orange Order, their function confined to such activities as preparing teas for the men. The big public displays of

Orangeism are male affairs, when men dressed in bowler hats and the ancient regalia of their Lodges march to triumphalist drumming on huge Lambeg Drums.

Northern women had not shared in the upsurge of activity around the suffrage campaign in the South. It may be an exaggeration to say that the movement "passed Belfast by" (Goldring), but Unionist women

> *"were generally less prominent than their nationalist counterparts in the political struggles prior to 1921. Thereafter they..... continued to play a rather invisible auxiliary role in Unionist and Orange organisations" (O'Dowd, 1987, p3)*

The religious divide, and particularly segregated schooling, also strengthened the hold of the churches over their congregations. The Catholic Church has not been very successful in preventing members of its flock (mainly male) and the occasional priest from becoming involved in violence through the IRA, but it has had more success in retaining obedience to its prohibition on abortion. The Church's version of Irish womanhood is a vital part of catholic identity.

Women were also marginalised in economic life. In 1926, 36% of women over twelve were in paid employment, but only 15% of married women. Women were confined to a narrow range of occupations, with 61% in three sectors; textile manufacture (26%);clothing (19%) and domestic service (16%). The only profession to employ substantial numbers of women was teaching, which on both sides of the border was 69% female (O'Dowd, 1987, p22). But a marriage bar confined women to the lower rungs. A similar obstacle in the civil service not only restricted women's advancement, but ensured that their influence was absent in shaping public policy (ibid, p26).

The ideal of the 'family wage' prevailed, but only among Protestants could this approach reality. Catholic male unemployment meant that Catholic married women were twice as likely to work as Protestants, and they predominated in the least attractive forms of work.

Unionist rule was not merely Protestant domination, but class and gender domination. Unionism united all classes in the Protestant community in defence of 'their' state, dividing the working class. This 'two nations' hegemonic strategy (see Chapter Two) involved no attempt to woo the support of one third of the population, who were denied some basic civil rights. This situation necessitated often naked state repression. But this

exclusive strategy was based on gender domination, which was legitimised in both communities through the church. To oppose one's church is to be disloyal to one's 'own side' (McLaughlin, 1986).

Until the civil rights movement of the late 1960s forced Northern Ireland to the attention of the world, British governments of all parties were content to leave Stormont to run its own affairs. Attempts by M.P.s and interested groups to raise questions were rebuffed. In 1935, following sectarian riots in Belfast, a group of British MPs, nationalist leaders, and bodies such as the NCCL called for a public inquiry. The prime minister, Stanley Baldwin dismissed this request:

> *"This matter is entirely within the discretion and responsibility of the government of Northern Ireland and by fundamental constitutional reasons the possibility of holding an enquiry by the imperial government is completely ruled out" (quoted in Farrell, p 142).*

A profound indifference and ignorance prevailed (Bew et al; Boyd). So long as stability could be maintained, the British government preferred to ignore complaints. They had no taste for tackling the Unionists, who were the main bastion of Britain's interests in Ireland.

The Fall of Stormont

This section is concerned with developments in the political economy of Northern Ireland under Stormont. It concentrates on moments of crisis when the conditions for economic expansion came into conflict with the political structures on which the state was founded. In other words the 'two nations' project of Unionism created obstacles to capitalist accumulation.

Major crises occurred in the early 1930s, the 1950s, and finally the late 1960s. In the earlier periods, a political challenge came from sections of the Protestant working class, as the material conditions on which their privileges depended were eroded. The Stormont regime survived. In the 1930s, the economy recovered with increased demand for industrial goods due to the Second World War. This temporary reprieve could not solve the fundamental economic problems caused by the declining industrial base. In the 1950s, the exhaustion of the old economic strategy brought more

fundamental changes. A policy of attracting multinational capital brought new forms of employment, but sectarian working practices were incorporated in the new situation.

In the late 1960s, when the Catholic community mounted a serious and sustained political challenge to the state through the Civil Rights movement and later armed struggle, tensions within the Stormont regime finally became unmanageable. The regime was not able to meet the movement's demands - essentially full citizenship for Catholics - without undermining the alliance on which its own power rested. While sections of the official trade union gave limited support to civil rights, the Protestant working class was not mobilised in support of reform. Instead the movement provoked the first serious electoral challenge to the official Unionist Party from within the Protestant community, as Ian Paisley's rabidly anti-Catholic Democratic Unionist Party won much working class support.

The revolt forced the British government to intervene and attempt to dismantle some of the more undesirable features of the state. They were unprepared for the implications of these 'reforms' which toppled the Unionist regime and forced them to take direct responsibility for defending the Union.

The Inter-War Years

> *"In economics, as in politics, the aim of Northern Ireland in the inter-war years might be summed up by the single word - survival." (Lyons, 1971, p706).*

As Unionists struggled to establish their state in Northern Ireland, they inherited an economy already facing serious problems. These weaknesses intensified during the next 50 years. The Six Counties were the most highly industrialised in Ireland, but industry was extremely narrowly based, and proved incapable of adjusting to changing economic circumstances. Part of the problem lay with the state boundaries.

> *"The Six Counties hardly seemed a rational, let alone an ideal, economic unit. Even its borders seemed to militate against it. On the landward side, a straggling frontier which owed more to religious than to economic geography, and cut off one of its two large towns, Londonderry, from its natural hinterland; to the east the inhospitable sea, adding to the cost of its imports and subtracting from the value of its exports" (ibid pp706).*

Industry was geographically concentrated around Belfast. By 1937, 63% of the population lived within 30 miles of the city. The majority of employment was in shipbuilding, engineering and textiles. Even before 1914 these industries revealed serious deficiencies (ibid). By 1924, 60% of the industrial workforce was in declining industries, compared to 40% in Britain (Johnson & Kennedy). Industry was export orientated, a tendency reinforced by the small domestic market. But Northern Ireland's location imposed extra transport costs both for finished goods and imported inputs. There was no domestic source of coal, and the linen industry became increasingly dependent on imported flax: 30% was domestically produced by the 1920s, declining to 10-12% in the late 1930s (ibid).

Lyons describes textiles and engineering as complementary, in that one employed mainly women, while the other was overwhelmingly male. But as Goldring points out,

> *"unfortunately the picture of Janet going to the linen mill and John to the shipyard is inaccurate because generally speaking, the wives and daughters of skilled Protestant workers were not in paid work. ... In fact, John went off to work in the yard and Maureen to the mill. They never met and so never married" (op cit, p35)*

Work in the textile mills continued as a major source of employment for women particularly in Belfast. In the 1930s women worked from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm with only 20 minutes for lunch, for a wage of between five and six shillings a week.[15] Conditions were harsh

> *"There weren't any health or safety regulations. most of the women who worked in the mill had very bad feet because they stood in water all the time. They had leg ailments because of the time they had to spend standing. And they had very bad chests because of the pouce that was in the air" (NUPE, 1992, p 81).*

Unemployment was high throughout the inter-war years. In 1921, the violence which accompanied partition, combined with a post-war slump, had created official unemployment of 18%. In the boom years of the late 1920s - an 'elastic' use of the term as Lyons points out - unemployment averaged 15%.

Northern Ireland's industry was particularly vulnerable to the catastrophic decline in international trade in the 1930s. The shipping market crashed, and employment fell from 20,000 in 1924 to 2,000 in 1933. Linen suffered competition from cotton, and later from artificial fibres: by 1938, 50% of the workforce was unemployed. While

service employment grew from 80,000 in 1926 to 100,000 in 1937, it could not make up for the collapse of industry. Officially recorded unemployment was more than 27% in 1932, and did not fall below 20% throughout the decade (Lyons, p710).

Even these figures are probably an underestimate. In 1925, regulations for claiming unemployment benefit were changed, and many were struck off the register. John Beattie (one of two Labour MPs elected in the 1920s) claimed that the official figure of 64,000 was 13,000-14,000 short (Farrell, p122). Women's unemployment was particularly underestimated, since married women were ineligible for benefit, and their unemployment was never considered as serious as that of men (McLaughlin, 1986).

Unemployment relief in 1933-34 absorbed more than a third of rate revenue, but

> *"It trickled through to the individual recipients as the bitter dregs of official charity grudgingly conceded after a searching means test" (Lyons, p713)*

Benefits were substantially lower than in Britain, a mere 2/6 per week for a single person, conditional on "task work" on an Outdoor Relief Scheme. Married men who did not take up this work or could not get onto a scheme were paid in kind. Single people got nothing, and if no relatives could keep them, were faced with the workhouse.

The effect on Protestants was traumatic. Not only did they lose work they felt theirs by right; they, with Catholics, had to turn to Outdoor Relief. Welfare provision had from the nineteenth century been designed to exclude 'foreigners' - Catholics. Protestants, facing humiliating interrogation by the Poor Law Guardians, were made to feel foreigners in their own state (Goldring).

Mass unemployment led to the founding of the Outdoor Relief Workers Committee. Its activity culminated in a strike to demand improved conditions for unemployed workers. The strike, which began on October 4th 1932, was accompanied by a wave of mass meetings, marches and riots. The government attempted to repress the movement by banning marches, imposing a curfew and sending in heavily armed RUC to arrest strikers. John Campbell, secretary of the Labour Party claimed

"Lord Craigavon's solution was to divide the workers into different religious camps an it was noteworthy that although the recent trouble was spread all over the city only in a Roman Catholic area did the police use their guns" (Farrell,p 129)

But according to Farrell,

"The marches and rallies were completely united and Geehan's leadership readily accepted even though he was a Catholic." (ibid p131)

After ten days, the strikers won nearly all their demands. Relief rates were doubled, and the means test regulations changed. Payment in kind was abolished.

But the unity of Protestant and Catholic so vital to the success of the struggle did not extend to a more fundamental challenge to the government. In the election three months later, sectarian loyalties were firmly in place. Labour's vote increased only slightly, and the Party won no new seats.

Over the next few years, the worst sectarian rioting since partition erupted, with attacks on Catholics in their work and homes. In 1935 200 Catholic workers were expelled from the shipyards, and Catholic women were forced from the Belfast linen-mills. This tragic aftermath destroyed the hopes of the strike leaders that lasting unity had been achieved. Farrell suggests that

"as in 1919, this working-class unity was fragile and would soon be shattered by the clever use of sectarianism. Dramatic though it was the struggle had been too short and too quickly forced back into the Catholic ghettos for it seriously to shake the Orange ideology or to change the political consciousness of the Protestant workers" (p131).

He believed that 1932 was an exceptional period, and

"Sectarianism retreated during the great strikes but it reappeared in the summer of 1933" (p136).

Rolston and Munck (1987) in a study of these struggles based largely on the recollections of participants, challenge this interpretation, arguing that

"the extent of class unity has been exaggerated and that the ODR strike was not a break with a historical pattern, but a disruption of a relatively autonomous sectarian politics (pp7-8).

They question the extent to which sectarianism was fomented by Unionist politicians 'beating the Orange Drum':

> *"Sectarian speeches by politicians did certainly influence public opinion, but they could hardly have caused the 1935 riots on their own ... sectarian struggles were as 'normal' as class struggle" (ibid p9).*

In their view 'pure' working class politics had never existed, and sectarianism continued in 1932:

> *"class and religion generated two forms of political practice ... and are not mutually exclusive" (ibid p 8).*

I find this latter interpretation more satisfactory. The result of the election following the strike is explicable if one sees it as the product of a different type of political practice, involving different loyalties. Elections had been constructed around the national question. Working class activity, however militant, did not necessarily challenge Protestant loyalty on this issue. Sectarianism was an integral part of class formation, and of every worker's living experience. This identity was not shed for an abstract class identity when struggle developed.

Although the O.D.R. strike was victorious, it precipitated no major change in state strategy to tackle the causes of unemployment. The conservativism of the Unionist regime prevented it from carrying out the structural changes necessary to reduce the dependence of the economy, while the militancy of Protestant workers increased fears of interfering with the economic basis on which the class alliance had been built. In the pre-Keynesian era, Unionists were - partly through necessity due to the limited resources available - the most orthodox of managers.

Some limited attempts were made to attract new industry through Loan Guarantees Acts enacted between 1922 and 1938, and the New Industries Acts of 1932 & 1937. The main recipients of state subsidy were existing firms. As late as 1955, only 54 firms, employing 6,000 had taken advantage of its provisions (Lyons, p711). While the British economy began to recover through a housebuilding boom, the politicised nature of housing in Northern Ireland made this impossible. By 1939 less than 4,000 houses had been built by local authorities; in urban areas, of 34,312 houses built, only 2,166 were public (Lyons, p712). Unemployment remained at 28.3% in 1938. The economy

did not recover until the Second World War brought a boom led by demand for military supplies.

At the outbreak of war, personal income per head in Northern Ireland was only 55% of the UK average (Simpson, p81). The gap was the result of a combination of factors: average wages below British levels, particularly for unskilled labour; higher unemployment and lower labour force participation; dependence on declining sectors. Agriculture still employed a quarter of the population and the predominance of small farms had been reinforced by legislation similar that in the South. Most farmers struggled to make a living, while agricultural wages were only two thirds of those in England and Wales (Lyons, p709).

Poverty was felt in shorter lives and harsher conditions. The death rate was the highest in the UK, and had changed little from the position at partition (14.4 per 1,000 in 1939, compared to 15.5 % in 1922-24). Infant mortality at partition had been below the UK average, but by the 1950s was 33% above. Children of the unemployed were 2 to 3 inches shorter than middle class children, graphic evidence of malnutrition. While no figures are available which break down these indices by religion, it is clear that the sectarian distribution of employment and public spending would mean that Catholics were disproportionately represented among the most disadvantaged.

The Impact of War

While war brought economic recovery, unemployment was slow to fall, remaining at 5% as late as 1943 when the British level had fallen to 0.5%. But traditional industries enjoyed a renewed boom. Employment in shipbuilding increased from 7,300 in 1938 to 20,600 in 1945; in the aircraft industry from 5,800 to 23,5000 (Lyons p731). Shirt-making increased to supply the military, and textile production expanded.

The Unionists were unwilling to impose conscription, but thousands from both communities enlisted in the British Army. Lyons argues that the

> *"connection with the UK was formidably strengthened by the fact that Northern Ireland had made good in blood its pledge to be stand by Britain .. (which did) more to perpetuate the partition of Ireland than a whole generation of Twelfth of July demonstrations." (ibid p730)*

The government of Ireland Act of 1949 strengthened the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, declaring

> *"that Northern Ireland remains part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom and it is hereby affirmed that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be a part of His Majesty's dominions of the United Kingdom, without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland." (Lyons, p738)*

Given the built-in Unionist majority at Stormont, this consent was extremely unlikely. A recently released civil service memorandum made the position even more forcibly:

> *"It has become a matter of strategic importance to this country that the North (or Ireland) should continue to form part of his Majesty's Dominions. So far as is can be foreseen, it will never be to Great Britain's advantage that Northern Ireland should form a territory outside his Majesty's jurisdiction. Indeed, it would seem unlikely that Great Britain would ever be able to agree to this **even if the people of Northern Ireland desired it.**" (quoted in Bew et al, 1985, p9) (my emphasis)*

This document suggests that the formal guarantees on partition owed as much to Britain' strategic interest as to gratitude to Loyalists.

Northern Ireland gained economically from the British government's pledge to abandon the 'step by step' approach to public spending, in favour of parity of service provision. With the development of the welfare state, this principle acquired major significance, and became the most important factor in raising Northern Ireland living standards. Although Stormont's financial autonomy diminished, there was a massive transfer of resources from Britain, while the Imperial Contribution fell to £7.5m by 1962-3.

> *"Within a decade Northern Ireland passed from the status of an exceptionally backward area to full membership of the welfare state." (Lyons, p741)*

But although formally incorporated into the British welfare system, Northern Ireland did not become a welfare state in a political sense. British welfare provisions were the product of the landslide Labour victory, and the inclusive one-nation ideology of the social democratic consensus which lasted until the 1970s. No such consensus was built in Northern Ireland. The Unionist Party at Westminster

> *"joined with the Conservative opposition in resisting the socialist legislation which established the welfare state, while at Stormont the Unionist Party solemnly resolved to annexe as much or the legislation as possible to its own purposes" (Lyons, p739)*

They were able to present expanded welfare provision as a benefit arising from the Union. Instead of posing a threat to the political basis of Unionism by demonstrating the effectiveness of working class politics, increased living standards for the Protestant community became further tied to the maintenance of the Union. Through their control over the administration of health and education, they were able to use the increased resources available to reinforce sectarianism.

There was no 'one nation' rhetoric. As Labour introduced universal suffrage for local elections in Britain in 1946, Unionists restricted the franchise still further, excluding lodgers, of whom two thirds were Catholic. Company directors retained up to six votes. Commitment to full employment was never a reality. Robert Babbington, later a Unionist MP, expressed this particularly blatantly:

> *"Registers of unemployed Loyalists should be kept by the Unionist Party and employers invited to pick employees from them. The Unionist Party should make it quite clear that the Loyalists have the first choice of jobs" (Farrell, p227).*

Social divisions are apparent in income distribution, which was more unequal than in the UK as a whole. Between 1949 and 1950, 43.8% of income earners received less than £50 per annum, compared to 35.7% for the UK. At the other end of the scale, 2.8% earned over £1,000, compared to 2.3% for the UK (Isles & Cuthbert, p 16). These figures are not broken down by religion, but they point to inequalities which in a state built on sectarianism, are bound to be reproduced in disproportionate poverty for Catholics. The male-female wage differential, which narrowed in Britain, remained constant in Northern Ireland (ibid, p 227).

The welfare state was built on the assumption of a family wage, with male breadwinner and dependent wife and children (see eg Dale & Foster, 1986). But discrimination in employment meant that this could not be a reality for Catholic families.

In spite of its increased financial commitment to Northern Ireland, the British government took no more interest in how the money was spent than it had in pre-war years. Bi-partisanship kept Ireland out of British politics, while Unionists were left to run Northern Ireland in the traditional way. A Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) delegation protesting at the change in the local franchise was informed by the Home Secretary that this matter was entirely for the Northern Ireland Parliament (Rumpf & Hepburn, p 202).

The sectarian divide remained an obstacle to the emergence of a mass social democratic party. The high level of trade union organisation, (200,000 members by the 1960s) was not reflected in working class influence on policy making. Brookborough, Prime Minister for the twenty years to 1963 refused to recognise the Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, to which the unions were affiliated, or to repeal the "obnoxious Trade Union Act of 1927" (Lyons p749).

While the state played a larger role in social reproduction for Catholics, "Catholic/Protestant 'apartheid'" (O'Dowd et al, 1981, p16) remained. Catholics continued to attend denominational schools, which were given more generous state funding after the War (a decision which cost the minister responsible his job). The new health service was also largely organised so that each community serviced its own needs.

These arrangements ensured that the churches lost none of their influence as organisers of cultural and community life. The conservative Unionist regime introduced only statutory provisions, and Northern Ireland remained the worst provided with nurseries and facilities for the elderly. The debates on sexual morality which took place in Britain in the 1960s passed Northern Ireland by, and the liberalising Homosexual Law Reform and Abortion Acts were not enacted there.

Nevertheless the development of welfare and more interventionist economic policy brought a fundamental change in the relationship of both communities to the state. Before the war, Catholics' main contact with the state had been with the repressive forces, or as recipients of the dole. Now for the first time they benefited significantly from state provision, and the state became a major employer of Catholic labour.

As the effect of expanded secondary education was felt in increased numbers of Catholic students in higher education, an educated middle class developed, who became increasing impatient with their second class status and demanded some share in political life.

Economic Decline

The relative prosperity of the war years continued for some time. Excess demand kept activity levels high, but disguised underlying problems. By the 1950s, linen and

shipbuilding were again in deep decline, and agriculture was experiencing severe problems.

Income levels had moved closer to the British levels in the war years, but the gap widened again in the late 1940s (Isles & Cuthbert, p 11). Average earnings were 13% lower for men, and 20% for women (ibid, p 13). Although by 1970s average earnings had reached 90% of the British level as national wage agreements spread (ibid, p 347), consumption per head was only 75%, reflecting large family size, lack of jobs for women, and concentration of employment in low paid sectors (Rowthorn & Wayne, p73).

Agriculture underwent a major transformation, with employment falling from 25% in 1945 to 10% by 1970. But it was the downward lurch of the traditional industries which was most traumatic. In 1952, four industries (shipbuilding, engineering, textiles and clothing) employed 44% of male, and 88% of female manufacturing employees. The first two were predominantly male, the latter female, with 79% of women in textiles and clothing alone (Isles & Cuthbert, p65).

It was in these industries that competition from newly industrialising counties was most intense. Japan and Korea developed shipbuilding based on relatively cheap labour and strong state support. In Northern Ireland on the other hand, the extra costs due to its location were compounded by increasing labour costs. State policy remained tied to preserving old economic structures rather than developing new more efficient industries.

By the 1970s, the shipping market had collapsed. Employment at Harland Wolff was down to 7,400, a third of its 1950 level. Textiles declined precipitately, and linen production fell by over 60% between 1960 and 1979 (Kennedy et al, p108). This was partially replaced by the short-lived artificial fibre industry in the 1950s.

While Britain experienced almost full employment throughout the 1950s, in Northern Ireland male unemployment never fell below 6.2% between 1946 and 1957, and female unemployment below 2.4%. (Isles & Cuthbert). The latter figure especially should be treated with caution. With the collapse of textiles, female unemployment was probably much higher. Male unemployment was continuously over four times the British rate, reaching seven times in 1954. While post-war unemployment did not approach the level

of the 1930s, it was much greater relative to Britain, at a time when the welfare state promised higher living standards.

Table 3.1 - Unemployment as a proportion of the civilian labour force (multiple of UK average)

	Northern Ireland	Scotland
1923	1.3	1.5
1929	1.2	1.2
1935	1.4	1.5
1938	2.1	1.4
1947	3.9	2.0
1950	3.4	2.1
1955	5.3	2.1

Source, Simpson, p 82

Unemployment would have been even higher had not emigration reduced the potential labour force. Barritt and Carter calculated that 58% of emigrants in the 1950s were Catholic. Simpson (1983) extended their calculations to the 1960s. Since Catholics were only around a third of the population, these figures suggest that more Catholics than Protestants emigrated throughout the period. Rowthorn and Wayne's calculations for the period 1926-81 suggest that this pattern persisted into the 1980s (op cit, pp208-9).

Table 3.2 - Net Emigration rates from Northern Ireland (thousand p.a.)

	Catholic	Non-Catholic	Total	Catholic emigration rate as proportion of Protestant
1937-51	6.5	2.3	3.7	2.8
1951-61	10.8	4.6	6.7	2.3
1961-71	6.9	2.8	4.3	2.5

Source: Calculated from Simpson, page 102

Low wages and high dependence on trade combined to produce an extremely low multiplier, estimated at 0.6 compared to an estimated British multiplier of 2.2 (Isles &

Cuthbert p338). This problem was compounded by the drain of resources to Britain through British control over the banking system. Northern Ireland industry was heavily dependent on bank lending, since 60% was privately owned compared to 36% in the UK as whole

Productivity was lower than in Britain, and as wages approached British levels, the advantage in labour costs was eroded. Low investment levels kept productivity low. Management inflexibility has been blamed for the inability to adjust to changed circumstances. Only 10% of new state-assisted plants were local initiatives in the 1950s (O'Dowd, 1981, p37). But to diversify the industrial base and change the labour process would have involved tackling the basis of the Unionist class alliance, which depended on the high wage skilled labour of Protestant men.

Stormont commissioned a number of reports on the economy.[16] Their recommendations were hardly radical, but they did call for a shift from subsidising existing jobs towards supporting new industry.

As unemployment mounted, an electoral threat to the Unionist Party forced a change of strategy. The NILP won four seats at Stormont in 1958, and again in 1962. Much of their support was in traditional bastions of Protestant privilege, such as the shipyards. The party had committed itself firmly to the Union in 1949. It was therefore mainly Protestant, and all its Stormont members were Protestant lay preachers (Goodman).

This challenge to Unionist hegemony precipitated a shift in the balance of power in the Unionist Party. In 1963, Terence O'Neill succeeded Brookborough as Prime Minister, pledged to a programme of economic modernisation.

O'Neill's Modernisation

The new strategy, embodied in the *Wilson Plan* of 1964, accepted the main recommendations of the various economic reports, and involved replacing employment in declining sectors with new investment. A total of £450 million in new expenditure was committed to improve infrastructure, including the development of new towns, and to provide grants and subsidies to attract new industry (Farrell p229).

This policy was relatively successful in the 1960s. Manufacturing output increased by 60% during the decade, faster than the UK (Rowthorn & Wayne, p72). Northern Ireland became a major producer of artificial fibres, which partially replaced traditional textile industries. While only six foreign firms had opened in Northern between 1945 and 1959, thirty were established in the next ten years (Teague, 1987, p 162).

Employment growth was not so satisfactory. Expansion of services stemmed the unemployment rate, but new manufacturing employment was not sufficient to replace that lost in declining industries. The percentage of employees in manufacturing fell from 44.9% in 1952 to 36.3% in 1971, and rose in services from 41.1% to 52.3% (O'Dowd, 1981, p 32). The industrial base remained narrow, with more than 80% of manufacturing employment in four major sectors in 1971

Table 3.3 - % of manufacturing employment in major industrial sectors, 1952-71

	1952	1959	1971
food	11.4	11.9	15.2
textiles/clothing	51.2	46.6	38.7
shipbuilding/marine engineering	11.6	13.0	5.5
engineering	14.3	17.2	21.6
all four	88.5	88.7	81.0

Source, O'Dowd et al, 1981, p35

The structure of the labour market was also changing, with a decline in male jobs, and an increase of female jobs of 40% between 1959 and 1979, many of them part time (Trewsdale, 1987). For the first time Protestant women entered the labour force in large numbers, as part-time service employment replaced the full-time employment of Catholic women in manufacturing. But as traditional industry also shed its skilled Protestant male employment, sectarian privilege was reconstructed in new forms. Protestant males moved into administrative and supervisory work both in the private and public sectors (Gibbon, 1975).

Sectarianism and Modernisation

The new industrial strategy was necessarily tied to the sectarian character of the state. The Unionists depended for their survival on the recreation of Protestant privilege. But this involved a shift in power within the Protestant establishment. The emphasis on attracting new capital posed a threat to traditional capital, and shipbuilding and engineering continued to be heavily subsidised. Local authorities, another major focus of clientism, lost power through the centralising tendencies necessitated by a more interventionist strategy.

The implementation of regional policy brought a layer of functionaries to Stormont, whose self-image was of technocratic modernisers. The new policy was

> *"replete with the 'growth centre' and 'New Town' rhetoric of 'objective' planning while its implementation sought to marry the new rhetoric with the practice of reproducing Unionist hegemony" (O'Dowd, 1980, p39)*

This apparent neutrality was noted by Quigley in his 1976 report:

> *"Nevertheless we take comfort from the fact that economic and industrial issues are much less a matter of political controversy and dissension in NI than in most other parts of the western world." (quoted in ibid, p60).*

But as O'Dowd argues, the report

> *"fails to recognise that the very same situation which produced the 'security problem' also produced the lack of 'political controversy' presumably associated with Left-Right splits elsewhere" (ibid)*

One of the most controversial issues was the location of new industry and growth centres. It is true that

> *"Deliberate discrimination is only part of the story .. government made no systematic attempt to direct investment towards any particular parts of the province. Rather it played an essentially passive role, supplying finance and support services as and where required by private firms ... Yet this in itself was enough to ensure that the bulk of private investment went to Protestant areas." (Rowthorn & Wayne, p76)*

Nevertheless many decisions appeared blatantly sectarian. Two new towns were developed in the strongly Protestant areas Antrim/Ballymena and Lurgan/Portadown (provocatively renamed Craigavon). The new University of Ulster was sited at the small

Protestant town of Coleraine rather than the second city of Derry, which was not even one of the eight 'growth centres'. A senior civil servant at Stormont defended these decisions on the grounds that

> *"There was usually much less local initiative there. In the richer more populous and more go-ahead eastern parts there was always far more locally-generated drive, private and commercial, as well as municipal" (quoted in Lee, p 419).*

A more apparently neutral defence of this decision was that access to Coleraine was more convenient. But this was somewhat disingenuous in view of the fact that rail links to Derry, and the other major Catholic town Newry, were cut. The process built up the East at the expense of the West, consolidating the 'dual economy' (Quigley Report, 1976 p41).

While the East expanded, Belfast itself declined. Catholic West Belfast was hardest hit, with unemployment remaining spectacularly high. As employment in old firms declined from 75% to 50% of the engineering sector between 1959 and 1980, new firms were set up with state help (O'Dowd, 1981). But no major engineering firm was established in West Belfast until the short-lived Strathearn Audio in 1974. The suburbs around Belfast housed mainly Protestants, and the skills and experience they had acquired in traditional industries allowed them to take on most of the new jobs.

Table 3.4 shows that the widening East-West divide was related to sectarianism, so that the 'dual economy' was not merely geographical but religious. Catholic unemployment exceeded Protestant unemployment in each of the 26 District Council areas, and in Belfast was particularly marked (Northern Ireland Census 1971).

Table 3.4 - Religion and Economic Change, 1961-71 by county

County	% RC	Unemployment		net migration %
	1961	1961	1971	1961-71
Derry CB	67.1	17.5	14.3	-17.6
Co Tyrone	54.8	12.3	12.6	- 5.9
Co Fermanagh	53.2	9.8	9.2	- 6.0
Co Armagh	47.3	12.8	9.6	+ 0.3
Co L'derry	42.6	11.5	8.8	+ 2.7
Co Down	28.6	8.3	6.2	+ 7.4
Co Antrim	24.4	6.7	5.9	+11.0
Belfast CB	27.5	8.5	9.6	-17.4

Source: Rowthorn & Wayne, p 75

Some commentators have argued that the influx of multinational capital would reduce the gap between Protestants and Catholics in the job market. Multinationals are agents of 'modernisation' with no interest in perpetuating archaic sectarian structures (Bell, 1978; Probert, 1978; Boserup, 1972). This argument has been put by protagonists on both sides of the 'revisionist/anti-imperialist' divide. Farrell (1980) for example writes of

> *"the decline of traditional industries, where discrimination and Protestant privilege were well-entrenched, and the rise of new firms which didn't discriminate or which employed a lot of mainly Catholic semi-skilled or female labour" (pp229-30).*

This view echoes the position taken by Farrell in relation to the ODR strike, when he saw sectarianism and class consciousness as opposites. Here the multinational corporation is seen as the embodiment of 'pure' capital. O'Dowd et al (1980), on the other hand, argue that multinationals do not transform sectarian structures but operate within them. Even if they do not consciously intend to discriminate, structural conditions force them to reproduce sectarian employment practices. Protestant workers have the skills, and experience which industry needs, and industry is already concentrated in Protestant areas, so

> *"the 'requirements of capital' were easily reconciled with existing sectarian geography and domination" (O'Dowd, p41).*

It is not in the interests of multinational capital to provoke problems with the workforce through challenging existing patterns of recruitment, and they tend to adopt them themselves. Only 10% of vacancies in new industries were filled through employment exchanges in 1965 (Bew et al, 1985). Nevertheless, multinationals operate within different constraints from domestic capital, which may influence their relation to sectarianism. This is illustrated by the response of United States firms to the MacBride campaign against discrimination.

Teague (1987) argues that both positions are weakened by a lack of empirical evidence to substantiate their assertions. Both sides make unwarranted assumptions about multinationals' role in establishing employment practice: firstly they exaggerate the importance of foreign capital relative to local employers; and secondly they assume too great a homogeneity of employment policies. Teague himself believes that

> *"some multinationals fit into the established system of industrial relations while others challenge it" (p166).*

He suggests that they need to be discussed on a case by case basis, although he does not pursue this himself. The current evidence will be examined in detail in Chapter Seven.

From Civil Rights to Civil War

O'Neill presided over a rapid expansion of inward investment and industrial growth. In pushing Northern Ireland towards modernisation, he established a Ministry for Development and Department of Health and Social Services in 1965. Another significant move was the recognition of the ICTU in 1964. He encouraged trade union participation in the Advisory Economic Council (later the Northern Ireland Economic Council - NIEC). From this time, the official trade union movement have been deeply involved in the quangos which have proliferated as Northern Ireland's problems deepened (Boyd, 1984).

O'Neill's modernising role was misunderstood by the British government, which showed remarkable willingness to accept 'modernisation' rhetoric as British-style social democratic reformism. O'Neill was not a bigot: he wrote disparagingly of predecessor Lord Brookborough:

"In twenty years as Prime Minister he never crossed the border, never visited a Catholic school and never received or sought a civic reception from a Catholic town." (quoted in Farrell, p240)

But his policy of "integrating Catholics, however gradually, into the Stormont state" (Lee p411) was largely confined to symbolic gestures. He visited Catholic schools and was "photographed chatting with priests and reverend mothers" (Farrell, p240). Even this enraged Protestants, and his explanation on his resignation did not help to calm feelings on either side

"The basic fear of Protestants in Northern Ireland is that they will be outbred by Roman Catholics .. It is frightfully hard to explain to a Protestant that if you give Roman Catholics a good house they live like Protestants ... they will refuse to have eighteen children, but if the Roman Catholic is jobless and lives in a most ghastly hovel, he will rear eighteen children on national assistance" (quoted in Lee, p426).

But he was neither able nor willing to let Catholics become more like Protestants in the vital matter of civil rights. It was not until 1969, following widespread revolt, that he conceded the principle of universal suffrage in local elections.

O'Neill took over a party which was beginning to fracture on class lines as economic restructuring challenged the traditional base of Unionist power. In his first years of office, he secured greater power for the Party. The NILP lost seats as Unionist modernisation "stole most of its policies" (Farrell) and brought economic expansion. Recovery was to be temporary, but it outlived his rule. It was the challenge of the civil rights movement at the end of the 1960s which broke up the Unionist Party and swept him from office.

The movement began with the Campaign for Social Justice founded in 1964, which started organising against discrimination in housing. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) formed in 1967, was to become the umbrella organisation for the wider movement. The main planks of its programme were one man (sic) one vote; no gerrymandering of electoral boundaries; fair distribution of council housing; repeal of the Special powers Act; disbanding of B Specials; a complaints procedure against local authorities.

The Birth of the Civil Rights Movement

There has been considerable controversy over the reasons why the civil rights movement developed at this particular time. The most fundamental factors were social and economic changes in Northern Ireland itself, particularly through the welfare state. But the movement also drew inspiration from the wave of protests sweeping Europe and the United States at the time, particularly the civil rights movement of the American South. Michael Farrell, one of the leaders of People's Democracy, reports that the tactic of the long march which the organisation adopted was modelled on the Selma Alabama Civil Rights movement (Farrell, p249).

The welfare state and the programme of economic modernisation had weakened the hold of traditional Unionism, while creating a new urban educated professional Catholic middle class. They provided the leadership of the new Catholic political parties, which came together as the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) in 1970, replacing the old nationalist parties. This group hoped that O'Neill's reforms would give them a greater role in the state, but found themselves increasingly excluded by the lack of political reform. McLaughlin (1986) suggests that the election of Labour in Britain in 1964 was important, since it raised expectations of change which were later disappointed.

Students from Belfast and Derry played an important role in some organisations, particularly People's Democracy. They were more radical than the group which became the SDLP, but they too looked to change within Northern Ireland itself, rather than to traditional Republican aspirations of a united Ireland. The violence with which the state responded to the movement led many to reject the possibilities of change within Northern Ireland itself.

The importance of these groups has probably been exaggerated in historical accounts of the civil rights struggles, while the role of 'ordinary people' in initiating activity tends to be underestimated. This is illustrated in one of the early protests against discrimination in housing. The Unionist council in Tyrone allocated a new house to a young single Protestant woman, the secretary to the local Unionist candidate, while Catholic families remained in desperately overcrowded conditions. This decision sparked a series of protest squats by local families. Farrell's version of these events says little of the role of these families, mentioning by name only Austin Currie, later SDLP MP

(Farrell, p245). But according to Mrs Gildernew, whose daughter had expected to be allocated the house, her family initiated the protest and been active over a long period.[17]

Margaret Ward writing of the Civil rights movement *Twenty Years On* reports that although Peoples Democracy had many women members, they were not prominent, with the exception of Bernadette Devlin, MP. In 1970 women

> *"were still unquestioningly accepting the fact that when we undertook a token overnight squat of a house in protest against housing policies, it was the women who would go and shop for food and make the endless sandwiches and ensure that all those who came to make speeches that evening would be fed. It think I missed most of the political talk because I was so busy buttering bread." (Ward, 1988, p129).*

The Northern Ireland civil rights movement was not alone among radical movements of the time in confining women's role to providing support for male activists. But in failing to challenge the subordinate status of women, the movement left intact a vital element in the construction and maintenance of sectarian boundaries.

Many on the left favoured a mechanistic explanation for the rise of the movement. Britain was seen as a prime mover in pushing towards reform, but was unable to control the monster of the Unionist backlash which this unleashed. The visit of the Southern Prime Minister was accorded major significance. Farrell suggests that

> *"The Southern economy was now dominated by Britain, to whom it was becoming as important as the North so that North-South rapprochement and economic co-operation became British policy..... The major obstacle to North-South rapprochement was the treatment of the Catholic minority in the North, and so the Westminster government began nudging Stormont gently towards reform" (p328).*

Furthermore

> *"British interests required a stable peaceful Ireland where production and the rate of profit were not disturbed by political upheavals. This in turn required the dismantling of the Orange system in the North to remove the grievances of the Catholic middle class and provide opportunities for their aspiring young politicians" (p329).*

Farrell again opposes a non-sectarian 'modernising' capitalism to the archaic practices in Northern Ireland.

"Ulster based industries had all but disappeared, and with them most of the economic reasons for the six-county state" (ibid).

Bell (1978) ties this specifically to the role of multinational companies.

"the new large British or multinational companies like ICI and Dupont were neither part of the traditional Unionist structure nor interested in sustaining an anti-Catholic policy in the north which could act as a hindrance to exploiting developing possibilities of exploitation in the south. The north needed to be 'rationalised'" (p123)

The lack of any serious attempt to explain the connections between these processes, or to provide evidence for them, did not prevent this explanation being accepted uncritically by much of the left. As Marlowe and Palmer point out, this analysis was shared by both anti-imperialists (Troops Out Movement, 1974;[18] Purdie, 1972) and anti-republicans (Stewart, 1975). Their criticism of the superficiality of this argument and the inconsistency of its approach to British imperial interests is well made.

There was no reason why Britain's relations with the South (which she had dominated economically since partition) should have been held up by the sorry state of Catholics in Northern Ireland. No Dublin government had done anything positive to promote their interests, or put pressure on Britain to do so.

"Both London and Dublin had played Pontius Pilate on the North for fifty years" (Lee p430).

The suggestion that Britain promoted reform is also wide of the mark. Before it was forced into activity in 1969, Britain preferred to have as little as possible to do with Northern Ireland. The Wilson government came to office

"unencumbered by anything that could properly be described as a Northern Ireland policy" (Bew et al, 1985, p10).

Labour's Home Secretary visited Northern Ireland for only half a day between 1964 and August 1969, when troops were sent onto the streets. Rather than take responsibility for reform itself, the Labour government appears to have given uncritical support to O'Neill's modernising project. Wilson wrote in 1965

"I was anxious that the Ulster Unionist government under Captain O'Neill should be encouraged to press on with their programme of ending discrimination in housing allocations and jobs and generally improving the lot of the minority of Northern Ireland. Since coming into office he had by Northern Ireland standards, carried through a remarkable programme of easement" (quoted in Bew et al p11).

In its belief in O'Neill's ability to carry out reforms the government

"relied on the facile notion of a division between liberalising reformists and 'right wing extremists'"(ibid, p13).

which failed to take account of the way in which sectarianism was embedded in the structures of the state. Sectarianism was seen as irrational prejudice, rather than a material reality in Northern Ireland society.

In criticising this prevalent belief in the reforming tendencies of British policy, Marlowe and Palmer fall into an opposite error. They pose an unchanging analysis of British domination, in which the maintenance of sectarian divisions within Northern Ireland is elevated to the main project of imperialism.

"No imperialist power on earth will voluntarily unite the working class of an oppressed nation under its control. Thus the border is the basis of Britain's domination of Ireland." (p11)

Both positions take a one-sided view of the relationship between sectarianism and capital accumulation, since they lack an appreciation of the way that sectarian divisions were bound up with class formation. Sectarianism is functional to capital as Marlowe and Palmer demonstrate, but can also come into contradiction with it, and the relationship is a historically changing one. The rise of the civil rights movement and the response of the Unionist state to its demands represented a crisis in these relationships which remains unresolved.

The Development of the Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights campaign became a mass movement in 1967 with a series of demonstrations. The first march, from Dungannon to Coalisland, scene of the protest against discrimination in housing, was peaceful. The next, in Derry on 5th October, brought a brutal response from the forces of 'law and order'.

Marching in Northern Ireland is crucial to maintaining ethnic boundaries. In Derry City the triumphalist parade of the City Walls by the Orange *Apprentice Boys* is part of an annual ritual celebrating the defence of the Protestant settlement. No parade of non-Unionists had ever taken place within Derry's walls: this was Protestant territory. The march was banned, but this only increased support. The violence meted out by the paramilitary RUC was, to the chagrin of the British and Stormont governments, watched on television around the world. Many people in Britain came for the first time face to face with this regime which was part of the British state.

As the movement gathered pace, so too did Protestant reaction. O'Neill's alleged 'softness' on the obstreperous *taigues*[19] lost him support both inside his government and in the wider Protestant community. The extreme right began to organise. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was resurrected and murdered a number of Catholics. Sectarian rioting in Derry and Belfast left thousands homeless. Territorial segregation increased as people were forced out of their homes, or moved into their own ghettoes for security. In the 1950s, Ian Paisley had helped establish Ulster Protestant Action whose aim was

> *"To keep Protestants and loyal workers in employment in times of depression, in preference to their fellow Catholic workers" (Farrell p233).*

This organisation, renamed the more innocuous-sounding Democratic Unionist Party, became more active in the 1960s. Paisley established the *Protestant Telegraph*, a "vitriolic anti-Catholic" paper, while Paisleyism itself

> *"is not only fundamentalist anti-Catholicism, but fundamentally anti-Catholic" (Lee p427).*

Paisley had strong connections with UVF members convicted of sectarian murders, but managed to distance himself sufficiently to avoid being implicated (Farrell p 237). He has been elected both to Westminster and the European Parliament, and remains one of the major figures in Northern Ireland politics, outlasting several leaders of the official Unionist Party.

In November 1968, O'Neill announced a package of reforms, but these failed to meet the demands of the civil rights movement. Radical elements, led by People's Democracy, planned to march from Belfast to Derry, beginning on New Year's Day, 1969. The march was not banned, but was harassed throughout its route by Loyalists,

in collusion with the RUC. The climax came at Burntollet Bridge, when the marchers were ambushed. It was later established that nearly a hundred of the attackers were off-duty B Specials (Farrell, p251).

The march crystallised the civil rights movement around the demand for *one man one vote*. Although O'Neill finally accepted this principle, his position within the Unionist Party was so weakened that he was forced to resign. Civil disorder was widespread. The new Prime Minister, Chichester Clark, continued O'Neill's policy of promising reform coupled with repression of the Catholic community.

A crisis came with the Derry Apprentice Boys parade in August. The event was usually accompanied by attacks on Catholics. This year a Bogside Defence Committee was formed to protect Catholic areas, and the invaders were forced out. The *Battle of the Bogside* brought British troops onto the streets. James Callaghan, who took the decision to deploy the troops, explained his reasons in his memoirs.

> *"..Anthony Peacocke, the Inspector-General, feared that the police would be unable to contain the Bogside for much longer and that if troops were not made available the police would be compelled to retreat from their position in front of the barricades to Victoria Police Station. They feared that the centre of the city would then be invaded by a riotous mob.... An hour later..the Inspector-General was ...formally asking for the assistance of troops, and that was the message I received in the air." (Callaghan, 1973).*

The British government agreed to the request. The troops were initially welcomed by many Catholics who saw them as protecting Catholic areas from Protestant para-militaries. But the honeymoon soon turned sour. The promised reforms were too limited and too late. Increasingly the army was used to repress the Catholic revolt.

Universal suffrage in local elections was introduced, and housing was taken from local authority control, but nothing was done about employment discrimination. More importantly, Unionists were left in charge of the repressive apparatus. The B Specials were disbanded, but former Specials were allowed to join the new Ulster Defence Regiment, which has always been overwhelmingly Protestant. The Unionist parliament was left to introduce reforms which struck at the heart of its existence.

> *"British policy now proceeded on the assumption that the struggle was essentially about civil rights, not about political power, and that the two could be separated" (Lee, p430).*

The irreconcilability of these two became increasingly evident as the revolt continued. The policy of containing the revolt and gradual reform came to be seen by the Catholic community as defending the Unionist regime. The IRA, practically defunct at the start of the civil rights movement since an abortive and unpopular campaign in the 1950s, rearmed and reorganised.

Such momentum for reform as the British government had mustered in the heady days of 1969 quickly ebbed away as the prospects of a 'quick fix' became more unlikely. By 1970 Callaghan was telling the House of Commons that Catholics had exhausted the sympathies of the government with their

> *"concentration on the imagined and real grievances at times to the complete exclusion of the measures of progress which are being made in this country" (Bew et al, 1985, p23).*

With the election of the Conservatives later that year, Reginald Maudling became Home Secretary and in charge of Northern Ireland. His reported comment on returning from his first visit, "what a bloody awful country" (Lee p434), did little to suggest that the government would apply sensitivity to their Irish policy.

This fear was justified when internment was introduced in August 1971. It was ineffective in security terms, netting hundreds of innocent people, and few active IRA members. Its propaganda effect was disastrous. The British government was accused in the European court of torturing internees. The court managed to support the government's own committee's findings, that there had been no brutality, only 'ill treatment' on the curious grounds that brutality was

> *"an inhuman or savage form of cruelty and that cruelty implies a disposition to inflict suffering, coupled with indifference to or pleasure in the victim's pain." (BSSRS, 1974, p31, my emphasis).*

But Britain's reputation was damaged internationally, and virtually the entire Catholic community was alienated from British policy. Civil resistance increased, as rate and rent strikes involved whole communities. The SDLP opposition withdrew from Stormont.

Resistance culminated in January 1972, on what has become known as *Bloody Sunday*. During a huge civil rights march in Derry, fourteen unarmed civilians were shot dead by soldiers of the Parachute Regiment. Although the government convened yet another commission to explain away the circumstances, the pressure it unleashed was too great. Stormont was 'prorogued' for a year in March that year and never reconvened.

Direct Rule from Westminster had begun. Expected to be a temporary measure while a solution was put together, Direct Rule has continued for over twenty years.

Conclusion

The demands of Catholics for equal rights within Northern Ireland had proved irreconcilable with the Unionist regime. While the civil rights movement claimed only the most basic democratic rights, these demands inevitably raised the question of state power within a state based on sectarianism.

In spite of the hopes of many of its activists, the movement had not been able to unite Protestant and Catholic workers in support of democratisation. Within the confines of the Northern Ireland state, these demands were seen as a threat to the material well-being of Protestants, while they struck at the heart of the Protestant state from which they derived their material privileges and their sense of identity.

The demand for civil rights had remained therefore a predominantly Catholic campaign, while the ties of Protestants to Unionist politics had, with some individual exceptions, become stronger as their position came under threat.

Although the demand for civil rights struck at the heart of the Unionist state, the movement did not challenge the central role of the Catholic Church in the community, nor the role of women within the Catholic family. As the hopes of peaceful reform faded, and the two communities became increasingly polarised, the focus of loyalty of the community remained around a religious identity. It has also perpetuated the counterposition of demands for rights for Catholics to rights for women.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. This commitment may be challenged by a referendum on Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution which claim sovereignty over the whole territory of Ireland, which is being projected a part of the current attempts to revive inter-Party talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

2. The Twenty Six Counties declared itself a Republic in 1949, leaving the Commonwealth. Republicans prefer the original name *Free State*, arguing that the term *Republic* implies that the national question has been completed.

3. Mary Cullen (Maynooth College) speaking at the Alice Stopford Green History Conference, 29.3.1992.

4. The Pale was the boundary of the English settlement, beyond which lived 'uncivilised' natives. Hence the expression 'Beyond the Pale'.

5. There has been controversy about the nature of the pre-colonial land system. Some nationalists believe that a communal system prevailed, while others argue that a more hierarchical structure, similar to feudalism existed (see Beresford Ellis, 1985; de Paor, 1986).

6. This position was suggested to me by Bill Rolston.

7. See Marx's attack on the 'political economists' for their attachment to the notion of absolute rather than surplus overpopulation (Capital, vol 3, chapter 13).

8. Speaker from Irish Women Workers Union, Alice Stopford Green Conference, 28.3.1992.

9. The Irish Volunteers were founded in 1913 to defend Home Rule, in response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (Beresford Ellis, p206).

10. The term *suffragist* was used by Irish campaigners who preferred to maintain a separate identity from the British *suffragettes* (Cullen Owers, 1991).

11. Only 16.7% of British adults claimed adherence to a Christian Church in the 1980s, according to the UK Christian Handbook.

12. The government proposal to allow abortion in very limited circumstances was opposed by both campaigners for women's rights and anti-abortionists, and was defeated. But voters supported the rights of women to receive information about abortion, and to travel abroad for abortions, both of which represented progress on the existing formal position.

13. This is how the contents of Bew et al (1989 are described on the cover.

14. The 1945 Labour government introduced universal suffrage in local elections. Stormont restricted the suffrage in 1946, excluding lodgers, two thirds of whom were Catholic. They also retained the property vote, giving company directors up to six votes.

15. Lilian Murphy, former mill worker, speaking at Alice Stopford Green conference, 28.3.1992.

16. The major reports were Isles & Cuthbert, 1955; Hall, 1962; Wilson 1965; Quigley, 1976.

17. Mrs Gildernew, speaking at Alice Stopford Green conference, 28.3.1992. In Farrell's appendix describing key individuals, including both historical figures and those still alive, only 3 of 76 are women.

18. I was one of the authors of this report.

19. A racist term for Irish (Catholics).

Economic Policy Under Direct Rule

Introduction

During the twenty years of Direct Rule, the Northern Ireland economy has undergone a dramatic decline. At the beginning of the 1970s, manufacturing output expanded more rapidly than in Britain, as state policy proved successful in attracting multinational investment. By the 1990s, the hope that new modern companies would replace declining indigenous industry as the basis for a thriving economy had proved illusory. New inward investment had all but dried up, while more than half the branch plants established in the 1960s had closed. The economy is increasingly dependent on both public employment and state support to maintain private employment. According to Rowthorn and Wayne, writing in 1988, the situation had reached the point where

> *"It would be little exaggeration to describe Northern Ireland in the late 1980s as a workhouse economy. A large part of its population is unemployed. Those who are not are chiefly engaged in servicing or controlling each other" (p 98).*

Changes in the way in which data is collected and the categories used prevent straight forward comparison of economic indicators (Gaffikin & Morrissey, 1990, p47). Employment statistics are notoriously problematic, tending to underestimate unemployment, particularly of women. There wee no less than 29 changes in the definition of unemployment during the 1980s, all but one of which reduced the official count (ibid, p55). The Unemployment Unit's figures for unemployment in Northern Ireland are approximately 30% higher than the official figures (ibid, p58).

In spite of these limitations, official figures do give some indication of economic performance in the 1990s, and the extent of the problems facing the economy.

Northern Ireland is the slowest growing region of the United Kingdom. Gross Domestic Product actually declined in 1990 (NIEC, 1992a, p9). In that year, GDP per head was

only 75.4% of the UK average, lower than any other region. This represents a decline from nearly 80% of British levels in the early 1980s (ibid, p 11).

Low GDP is a result both of low productivity, and the small proportion of the population in work. The dependency ratio is higher, while Northern Ireland also has the highest proportion in the UK of people of working age outside the labour force (Gudgin & Roper, 1990), a result of lower labour force participation, and higher unemployment. Redundancies rose by over 90% in 1991 (NIEC, 1992a, p 25). Unemployment in Northern Ireland has consistently been at least 2 percentage points above the next highest UK region, the North of England. In the last quarter of 1992, it stood at 14.7%, compared to a UK average of 10.1%, and a rate of 11.6% in the North of England (Economic Trends).

Poor economic performance is matched by low living standards. Income per capita remains the lowest in the UK. In 1989 it was 87.7% of the UK average, although household income is above average due to large family size (Social Trends, 1992). Average hourly earnings remain substantially below British levels (New Earnings Survey). Distribution of earnings was more uneven: the proportion of tax payers earning less than £7,500 was 36.9% in 1989-90, compared to a UK figure of 29.0%. At the top end, however, the figures were much more similar; 16.6% in Northern Ireland earning more than £20,000, compared to a UK average of 18.5% (Regional Trends).

The causes of economic decline do not lie solely within Northern Ireland. The world economy suffered severe recession in the 1970s, precipitated by the oil price rise of 1973. But underlying the immediate crisis was the exhaustion of the post war expansion based on the triumvirate of 'Taylor, Ford and Keynes' (Grahl & Teague, 1989, p37).[1] The UK economy was severely affected, especially in manufacturing and this problem was magnified in Northern Ireland.

During the 1970s substantial restructuring and internationalisation of production took place. There was a rapid expansion in the number of production units as newly industrialising countries (NICs) sought foreign investment. Northern Ireland was faced with stronger competition for new investment while the nature of the new branch plants which had been established in the 1960s made them vulnerable to closure. While some NICs developed a strong industrial base through strategic state intervention (Amsden, 1990), Northern Ireland's industrial policy was largely confined to providing grants and subsidies for private capital. As European integration develops, the problems

of Northern Ireland's position as a peripheral region of a peripheral state have intensified.

Internationalisation of production has been accompanied by a convergence of economic policy in Europe and a substantial rightward political shift, as the material basis for the post-war social democratic 'one nation' consensus crumbled. In Britain, economic liberalism has been combined with authoritarianism (Gamble, 1988) and explicit anti-feminism (ten Tusscher, 1986).

The British social democratic consensus was never inclusive in reality. Women's dependence on a male breadwinner was assumed in the structures of benefit and family policy, while black people and other ethnic minorities were excluded (Williams, 1989). But in Northern Ireland an explicit 'two nations' ideology has always been dominant. The attempt to replace traditional industry with new Fordist production under Unionist rule recreated sectarian working practices in new forms, while Catholics remained excluded from full citizenship. But when formal social democracy was imposed with direct rule, the economic basis on which it might have survived was already disappearing.

The 'Troubles' and the severe economic crisis have made it politically impossible to implement the full rigours of the neoliberal agenda. Not only was Northern Ireland spared Thatcher's 'flagship policy' the Poll Tax, but the government found itself in the position of implementing much stronger equal opportunities legislation (in relation to religion) than its predecessors, while dismantling the powers of British local authorities in this area. Nevertheless, since the mid 1980s, public spending cuts and deregulation have been introduced, widening economic inequalities. These disparities inevitably reflect the continuing structural differences based on class, gender and religion.

This chapter will trace some of the key economic changes during the period of direct rule, while their implications for gender and sectarian divisions will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Direct Rule and British Policy

When Stormont was prorogued, its legislative and executive powers were transferred to Westminster. A Secretary of State of Cabinet rank was placed in charge of the Northern Ireland Office, and the responsibilities of the eight local departments were allocated to Ministers of State. A thrice weekly meeting of ministers, senior civil servants and the heads of the security forces was instituted, "thereby unifying civil, police and military administration" (Elliott & Wilford, 1987, p295).

Legislation was controlled from Westminster. Ares formerly under the control of Stormont became the subject of Orders in Council. While there were various provisions for consultation with local interests, these Orders could not be amended, and there was no direct local accountability.

Local government, object of some of the most bitter complaints from the civil rights movement, had already been stripped of many of its powers. Housing was placed under the Housing Executive in 1971. New local boundaries came into force in 1971, reducing the number of authorities from 73 to 26. With Direct Rule, local authorities lost all their major functions: their powers were confined largely to leisure and street cleansing. Education came under five regional education and library boards; responsibility for health and social services was combined under four regional boards. These bodies contained a minority of elected councillors, appointed at the discretion of the relevant minister.

Financial relations with Britain were simplified, with the institution of the block grant system. Revenue comes from three sources: the attributed share of UK taxes minus reductions for reserved services; non tax revenue; and grants from the Treasury. Spending priorities are determined by UK ministers, in line with UK priorities. Spending has continued on a parity basis, and local needs have ensured a higher than average per capita public spending.

Direct Rule was intended as a temporary measure, pending a political settlement. The preferred British solution was devolved local government involving power sharing. There have been six major constitutional initiatives,[2] the last of which, inter-party discussions initiated under Peter Brooke, broke down in November 1992. None has succeeded in producing more than a temporary reversion from Direct Rule. All have attempted to find

a settlement within the present state boundaries, but within this structure, the positions of the two communities (whatever their internal differences) have proved irreconcilable.

The Anglo Irish Agreement, signed in 1985, for the first time acknowledged the Republic's interest in Northern Ireland. But the wording

> *"is so imprecise, its success or failure rests on how it is sold to each of its target audiences" (Rolston, 1987, p59)*

While the British government hailed it as marking the end of the Republic's claim for national unity, the Southern government presented it as a defence of the nationalist aspirations of Northern Catholics (ibid, p58). Its survival therefore rests on the ability of the politicians to convince their own communities that they have made no meaningful concessions. Any developments remain largely symbolic.

Northern Ireland politicians are in the peculiar position of regularly fighting elections which - even if they win them - cannot bring them direct political power. They have in effect been reduced to 'lobbyists' over the communal share out of jobs (O'Dowd, 1987), with no part in forming the policies which determine the size of the job total. Although wining seats at Westminster elections cannot give them control over the policies implemented in Northern Ireland, these elections are fought almost entirely on local issues, by parties which exist only in Northern Ireland. Sectarian voting patterns remain firmly in place.[3]

The Conservative Party made some attempt to organise in the last general election (1992), putting forward candidates in all constituencies except West Belfast. But its involvement was marginal, and its vote (6.1% of the total) largely irrelevant. The Labour Party retains its formal support for Irish unity. It does not organise as a party in Northern Ireland, since this would give tacit support to the Union. But this policy probably reflects unwillingness to become involved with awkward issues as much as principled objection.

Only local councils have some form of control, although their powers are minimal. Elections are sharply contested, since they provide an arena for political debate about issues far beyond the competence of the councils themselves. Sinn Fein has taken a number of council seats in recent years, and in spite of bitter opposition and threats of boycotts, Unionists have been forced to sit on committees with them. They have even

found common cause on some economic and social issues: all groups pressure for more public spending, and Belfast City Council unanimously opposed the decision by the management of the Royal Victoria Hospital Group to seek Trust Status.

Unionist as well as nationalist politicians complain that the political structures created by Direct Rule resemble a colonial relationship. But unlike nationalists, they favour a local parliament based on majority rule. This would mean the return of Unionist (Protestant) rule.

The powerlessness created by the constitutional situation is compounded for women. The

> *"past, and continuing, centrality of Catholic/Protestant relations in policy and research (which) has obscured the realities of other forms of inequality to varying degrees, with gender inequality very low on the list." (Davies & McLaughlin, 1991, p5).*

No woman has represented a Northern Ireland seat at either Westminster or the European Parliament since Direct Rule, while most male representatives have taken a strongly anti-feminist position. There are no political representatives to take women's issues forward within the formal political process.

There are few women councillors, and the lack of powers of local councils prevents them being a vehicle for promoting women's interests. There is no equivalent of the Women's Committees of local authorities which have provided a focus for promoting women's rights in Britain, including the provision of services such as child-care. Councils in Northern Ireland have no powers in this area. Britain has one of the lowest levels of publicly-funded childcare in the EC. Within the UK, Northern Ireland has the worst provision, making it the most disadvantaged area within the EC (Hinds, 1991, p 93).

Tory and Labour policy under Direct Rule

The emphasis of policy has differed under Tory and Labour administrations, but there has been more continuity than difference. Labour, anxious not to appear 'soft on terrorism', never challenges the consensus on security matters. Even where formal policy differs, as with the Party's opposition to the *Prevention of Terrorism Act* (PTA),

they have not campaigned for it. Neither party has wanted to make Ireland central to its platform, and this bi-partisanship has marginalised serious debate on in Britain. While most parliamentary debate is relentlessly confrontational, government statements on Ireland are greeted with respectful attention and even congratulations from the Opposition.

The events leading to the abolition of Stormont - especially internment and Bloody Sunday - alienated virtually the whole Catholic community. British policy in the early years of Direct Rule aimed at containment of the revolt, reform, and the swift implementation of an internal solution. Of these three, only containment has been a constant feature, while with economic decline, the British state has been forced to play an increasingly interventionist role in the economy.

The Tory administration which initiated Direct Rule attempted to devolve power as soon as possible thorough the creation of a power sharing Assembly. This Assembly was brought down under the subsequent Labour administration when Unionist opposition culminated in a strike organised under the umbrella of the Ulster United Unionist Workers Council, which the government was unable or unwilling to confront (see for example Boyd, 1984).

Labour showed greater willingness to see Direct Rule as a semi-permanent arrangement, particularly after the failure of another constitutional initiative in 1977. Roy Mason, who became Northern Ireland Secretary in 1976, was unsympathetic to Catholic grievances, and told his first press conference

> *"(u)nemployment, little new investment, too many businesses closing down, these are the questions which must receive priority" (Bew et al, 1985, p89).*

Mason viewed the reform programme as essentially complete: his task was to concentrate on arresting economic decline. His

> *"bumptious and insular arrogance made him relish his role as some sort of governor bringing enlightenment and prosperity to the benighted Irish" (ibid, p92).*

In bringing 'normality' to Northern Ireland in the form of old-fashioned labourist politics, Mason did not address the structural inequalities in access to employment and services. Increased state spending did much to "underpin the reproduction of sectarianism" (ibid, p 95). His emphasis on building a strong economy was often more rhetorical than real.

Although Northern Ireland was spared the monetarist squeeze of the latter part of the Callaghan government, there was no serious strategy to tackle the chronic economic problems.

Mason regularly announced that the IRA was defeated, and its supporters isolated. His triumphalism and uncritical support for the security forces increased nationalist hostility. In 1981, when Labour was in opposition, Mason visited the dying hunger striker Bobby Sands to inform him that he would get no sympathy from the British labour movement. Sands had been elected an MP while on hunger strike, and Mason's action alienated many Catholics who were unsympathetic to the IRA.

Labour policy was based on the notion that more jobs would solve the political problem. The Tories have pursued a more vigorous search for a political solution, seeing a political settlement as a precondition for economic recovery. This accords with one of Thatcher's favourite maxims, 'you can't solve a problem by throwing money at it'.

The relationship of Thatcherism (and post-Thatcherism) with Northern Ireland has been contradictory. Thatcher's brand of 'two nations' conservatism has much in common with Unionism: she herself had a personal empathy with the Unionists, who, like her, are 'conviction politicians' (Morrissey & Gaffikin, p35). She demonstrated her disdain for Irish nationalism in her summary rejection of the proposals from the New Ireland Forum,[4] "No, No, No". But she presided over what Unionists see as the greatest betrayal of their cause by a British government, the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The strategy of isolating republicans from their base in the nationalist community had led the government to make a deal with the 'Catholic nationalists' of the Republic.

The political situation has also brought contradictions at the economic and social level. Unionist power was built on the use of the state apparatus to maintain privilege, and the economic decline of the past two decades has reinforced dependence on state subsidy. Conservative in social and political outlook, Unionist politicians are united (as are nationalists) in demanding increased public expenditure to shore up the economy. The strategy of undermining the credibility of critics of British rule has narrowed the possibilities for free market solutions, while in recent years the government has come under pressure from the Irish-American lobby to take more radical measures against discrimination.

Although in general terms, "unlike previous British governments, the Tories now do not regard Northern Ireland as a special case" (Rowthorn and Wayne p87), government spending has continued to rise under the Tories, and is a greater proportion of total output than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. In 1989, the Guardian's political commentator referred to "the Independent Keynesian Republic of Northern Ireland" (Morrissey & Gaffikin, p35). But government spending has taken specific forms as the Thatcherite agenda comes into conflict with the political structures and economic problems of Northern Ireland. While social spending and public sector employment have fallen, public expenditure remains overwhelming important as a direct and indirect provider of jobs.

Economic Policy and The 'Troubles'

Violence which has been continuing for the past 20 years has clearly played a part in economic decline. There have been a number of attempts to quantify its effect in terms of jobs lost. This is necessarily a speculative exercise: it involves estimating jobs lost directly due to bombing of premises; those lost due to plant closure where the political situation was a factor in the decision; and even more difficult, loss of jobs from new investment deterred by the violence.

Fothergill and Guy (1990) in a study of branch plant closures during the 1980s, found that the 'Troubles' were not a significant factor in decisions to close in that period. But the major job losses came in the 1970s (NIEC, 1992b). Canning et al (1987) suggest that the 'Troubles' were responsible for the loss of 40,000 manufacturing jobs between 1971 and 1983. Their calculation of the difference between actual jobs and estimated employment in the absence of the 'Troubles', is based on a comparison with the outcome in other UK assisted areas (p219). This estimate attributes all job losses unaccounted for by specific named factors to the Troubles.

The NIEC argues that the decline in Northern Ireland's share of employment in externally owned manufacturing firms is evidence of the impact of the 'Troubles' on inward investment. In 1973, Northern Ireland had 3.6% of the UK total. This fell continuously to 1989, when it stood at 1.9%, a drop of nearly 50%. In contrast, the share going to Wales increased by 17%, while in Scotland, the share fell by only 10%, and started to recover in the late 1980s.

Table 4.1 - Share of UK Manufacturing Employment accounted for by non-UK owned enterprises, 1973 - 1989

	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	England	Total
1973	3.6	11.9	5.3	79.2	100
1989	1.9	10.6	6.2	81.3	100
% change	-47.2	-10.9	+17.0	+ 2.7	

Source: NIEC, 1992b, p 30

Canning and his co-authors argue that the economic impact of the Troubles has not been wholly negative.

> *"It is a mistake to blame these economic problems on the troubles. Indeed it could be argued that while the troubles has led to a loss of manufacturing jobs, their net effect on the regional economy has been positive, due to the induced expansion of public sector expenditure and employment." (Canning et al, 1987, p211).*

Table 4.2 - The Impact of armed conflict on Employment, 1970-1985

	Change in employment due to conflict (000s)	% of 1970 employment
agriculture	nil	nil
manufacturing	-46	-25
other industry	0	0
non-govt services	+5	+3
govt services	+36	+38
Total	-5	-1

Source: Rowthorn & Wayne, p94

Rowthorn & Wayne (1988) attempt to quantify these other jobs effects (Table 4.2). Their estimate of 46,000 manufacturing jobs lost (over a slightly longer period) is not dissimilar to that of Canning et al. But unlike them, Rowthorn and Wayne view the redistribution of jobs, particularly the weakening of the industrial sector, as a serious problem, and the present conflict is "one of the greatest obstacles to a sustained

economic recovery" (p121). The difference lies not merely in numbers but in their treatment of the 'Troubles'. For Canning et al, they are an 'external' factor, whose causes are outside the scope of the analysis. For Rowthorn & Wayne, the causes of the conflict are central to their concerns.

While the economy been affected by political violence, the aim of 'defeating terrorism' has been a component in constructing economic policy. Richard Needham, then Economic Minister at the Northern Ireland Office, made this connection clear in 1989.

> *"It has to be in our interests ... for us to try to get more jobs in West Belfast ... that is the way in which we will reduce the terrorist menace, by making people economically independent from terrorism. That is the prime strategic objective of the government."* [6]

In the 1970s, particularly in the Mason period, economists and planners blamed the 'Troubles' for economic decline, but a change of emphasis emerged in the 1980s.

> *"'The troubles' have been redefined as a problem of perception and business confidence. In particular the 'distorted media image' of the province is attacked" (O'Dowd & Rolston, 1985, p219).*

The development of the Belfast Enterprise Zone, and the Belfast Urban Plan were largely driven by the need to purvey a different image, in order to attract business. But "politicians have different messages for different audiences" (Rolston & Tomlinson, p50). Northern Ireland minister Nicholas Scott told parliament in 1987

> *"The pattern of unemployment in West Belfast, in parts of Derry and Strabane and elsewhere reflects the IRA's hypocrisy when it complains about unemployment among Catholics in those towns and cities, yet we know that it has contributed more than any other single factor to that unemployment in Northern Ireland" (quoted in ibid, p46).*

The new emphasis on encouraging local enterprise has been associated with greater politicisation of job discrimination. Local groups such as Obair and the West Belfast Economic Forum have been running more sophisticated campaigns for jobs in mainly nationalist West Belfast. This has brought some targeting of employment creation and training programmes in these areas. Pressure (and funding) from the United States has also been important. The Kennedy Enterprise Park in West Belfast, funded by US aid, was opened by the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1991.

But groups or individuals thought to have connections with republicanism have been marginalised. *Political vetting* has removed funding from suspect groups, or closed them down.[6] The Catholic Church has proved a valued ally in the government's attempt to isolate republicanism, and has been given a major role in providing training schemes (ibid, p136).

Industrial Policy

Industrial development policy has been based since the 1950s primarily on subsidies and grants to private industry. The Industrial Development Board (IDB) took over responsibility for implementing policy in 1983, with the Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU) retaining responsibility for small companies (those employing less than 50 people). While the level of state support is greater than in any other UK region, industrial policy has been 'pragmatic' (NIEC, 1991a, p2), with little overall strategic planning. Private firms have been provided with grants and infrastructure, but have been largely unconstrained by intervention aimed at wider planning goals. The approach is characterised by an

> *"unqualified faith in the private sector, and the ability of the market, to rescue the economy" (Morrissey & Gaffikin, 1987, p47).*

A study of the relation between unemployment and the location of industry (NIEC 1990a) suggested that employment creation is not being targeted at unemployment blackspots.

Table 4.3 - Unemployment and Job Creation, 1988

	% share of jobs created by 1988 a	% share of NI unemployment, 1988 b	Location ratio a/b
C Antrim	9.9	19.6	0.5
Co Armagh	12.5	7.5	1.7
Belfast	15.2	24.8	0.6
Co Londonderry	29.4	15.8	1.9
Co Down	16.2	17.7	0.9
Co Fermanagh	5.9	3.4	1.7
Co Tyrone	10.9	11.2	1.0

Source: NIEC, 1990a, p 42

There are also marked intra-regional differences in unemployment; for example Derry's favourable position may not be reflected at a more local level. In Belfast, which has almost a quarter of unemployment, the location ratio is very low. But even this hides large differentials within the city, with some areas doing even worse than implied in the above table. Of 180 external companies given aid between 1946 and 1980, only three were located in West Belfast (where male unemployment is well over 50% in some wards) and only one, Ford Motor Company, remains.

By the 1970s, the relative success in attracting inward investment had come to an end, while firms which moved in during the 1960s were starting to leave. In response to economic decline, Labour applied expansionary polices. State employment grew rapidly, particularly in education and welfare, as services caught up with those in Britain. Public employment replaced manufacturing jobs, while subsidies to industry were increasingly used to maintain existing jobs rather than to create new ones. This process culminated in the nationalisation of the two major private sector employers, stronghold of the Protestant skilled male workforce, Harland and Wolf and Short Brothers.

Industrial policy in the first half of the 1980s remained essentially the same, with job creation/retention the overriding priority. The Tories introduced Enterprise Zones, including one in Belfast, and one in Derry. These were aimed at attracting private firms through increased grants and tax exemption. This policy represented less change in Northern Ireland than it did in Britain: since Direct Rule, economic policy had been

directly administered by central government, with little local accountability. There was tacit agreement on the policy from local politicians, who tended to confine themselves to struggles over the location of jobs within Belfast rather than the principle itself. The specific extra advantages offered by the Enterprise Zone in Belfast were relatively minor. More important were the 'intangible' aspects (O'Dowd and Rolston, 1985, p221). These involved rebuilding the image of Belfast as a commercial centre, and attempting re-establish confidence in potential investors.

By the late 1980s, the weakness of industrial strategy had become increasingly evident as attracting new inward investment became more difficult. The effectiveness of the policy was widely criticised, as the cost of creating and maintaining jobs soared (NIEC, 1985, 1990 and 1992; Gudgin & Roper, 1990).

The *Pathfinder Process* initiated by the Department of Economic Development (DED) was intended to develop a more targeted approach to industrial policy. The DED's document *Building a Stronger Economy* (1987) identified six weaknesses of the economy: lack of an enterprising tradition; deficiencies in training, work and managerial competencies; distance penalties and the small local market; small manufacturing sector, large public sector; dependence on public funds; the Northern Ireland political situation. Task forces were established to deal with the first five: the "Northern Ireland political situation" was clearly felt to be outside the scope of their inquiries.

As a result, the target of job creation was replaced by that of creating 'competitiveness'. As the NIEC points out, this goal is ill-defined, and has yet to impinge significantly on IDB policy. But in spite of the adoption of the fashionable vocabulary of the enterprise culture (DED, 1990) there has been little apparent change of strategy.

One area of industrial policy in which Thatcherite policies have prevailed is privatisation. The companies nationalised under Labour have been reprivatised at a cost to the tax payer of £1.5 billion (NIEC, 1991a, p 18), while utilities such as electricity and telecommunications are now in private hands.

Inward Investment

Industrial strategy was geared almost exclusively towards promoting inward investment up to the 1970s. Only 8.5% of jobs promoted between 1947 and 1967 were in

indigenous companies (Rowthorn, 1987, p116). This created dependence on multinational branch plants which proved vulnerable to closure, and were the largest component of manufacturing decline in the 1970s and 1980s. While a growing proportion of inward investment is now in the service sector, IDB policy has been targeted almost exclusively at manufacturing, and it is in this sector that data is most easily available (NIEC, 1992b, p 12).

Teague (1987) describes the period 1958-1975 as a "virtuous circle" in relation to multinational investment. Investment expanded rapidly in the 1960s, with 27 United States projects established by 1968 (a rise of 20 over ten years). European companies were slower to invest, but there were 22 projects by 1975. (ibid, p162). According to Simpson (1983, p90) the main factors responsible for the 'virtuous circle' were

1) *full employment elsewhere in the United Kingdom*
2) *some difference in earnings levels of labour costs*
3) *government inducement*
4) *lower energy prices*

A "vicious circle" set in the mid 1970s. The first and fourth factors above had been reversed, while earnings (2) which had risen more slowly than the UK average in the period 1956-1973 were now rising at a faster rate. Government inducements (3) however had increased, in spite of competition from other regions, and were approximately twice the level in other UK depressed regions (Rowthorn & Wayne). What Simpson called the 'local disorder' had also started to have a deterrent effect on inward investment.

Table 4.4 - Openings and Closures of Foreign Owned Units by country of Origin, 1976-1985

	USA		W Germ		RoI		O Euro		Asia		S Africa	
	O	C	O	C	O	C	O	C	O	C	O	C
1976	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
1977	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
1978	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1979	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1980	7	3	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
1981-1985	5	12	3	4	9	1	8	5	3	-	1	-
Total	17	17	4	6	10	1	9	11	3	0	1	0

Source: Teague, 1987, p 168

Table 4.4 shows a slight net increase in foreign-owned units in the 1980s, as multinationals switched to acquisition rather than new investment (ibid, p169). By the late 1980s, there was an absolute decline in the number of foreign-owned plants (Table 4.5). The fall was due to a reduction in US and Republic of Ireland plants, while EC and Far Eastern investment continued to grow.

While Teague specifically excludes British capital from his definition of *multinational*, British-owned firms are included as inward investment by the NIEC (1992b) and Gudgin et al (1989). This classification effectively recognises the separateness of Northern Ireland from the British economy. For the purposes of the present work, it is useful to treat British firms separately from indigenous firms: British capital can be supposed to be similar to foreign-owned capital in that it is not wedded to the sectarian employment practices associated with Northern Irish-based companies. But in the discussion in Chapter Seven, investment from outside the UK or Republic of Ireland will be treated separately from other multinationals, since information on the number of firms, and employment in this category is more easily available.

Table 4.5 - Externally owned manufacturing plants by country of ownership

	Number			% of total		
Country	1973	1986	1990	1973	1986	1990
GB	290	148	121	83	61	58
US	31	37	30	9	15	14
Canada	4	4	4	1	2	2
RoI	14	32	25	4	13	12
Other EC	8	16	20	2	7	10
Far East	0	1	4	0	0	2
Other	3	6	3	1	2	2
Total non GB	61	96	86	17	39	42
Total	351	244	207	100	100	100

(Note: Short Brothers, now owned by the Canadian Bombardier Company, is excluded)

Source: adapted from NIEC, 1992b, p 14

The number of British-owned plants dropped by 58% in this period, while the British share of inward investment fell from over 80% to less than 60%. Employment fell much faster than the number of plants (Table 4.6). Over the whole period 1973-1990, employment in British-owned companies fell by 63.9%; the decline of 22.9% in non-UK firms was less steep, but employment had already started to fall in the early 1980s, while plant numbers were increasing.

Table 4.6 - Employment in Externally owned manufacturing plants by country of ownership

	Employment			% of total		
Country	1973	1986	1990	1973	1986	1990
GB	64,445	22,331	23,259	73.6	53.6	56.6
US	17,344	11,654	9.282	20	28	23
Canada	606	808	951	1	2	2
RoI	1,379	3,012	2,718	2	7	7
Other EC	2,579	2,875	3,155	3	7	8
Far East	0	13	1,496	0	0	4
Other	1,280	957	224	1	2	1
Total non GB	23,116	19,319	17,826	26.4	46.4	43.4
Total	87,561	41,650	41,085	100	100	100

Note: Figures do not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: NIEC, 1992b, p 15

Non-indigenous firms accounted for 53% of manufacturing employment in 1973, of which 29.8% was in firms which had moved in since 1945. Research by the NIERC (Gudgin et al, 1989) showed a net decline of 66,900 manufacturing jobs between 1973 and 1986. Of the 90,800 jobs lost, 55,800 were in the non-indigenous sector, the majority (41,000) through closure, and 14,800 through contraction of surviving firms. Over half the jobs lost in external firms (35,700) were from inward moves since 1945. Of 375 externally owned factories in 1975, 181 had closed in 1986 (Fothergill & Guy, 1990). Only 6,900 new jobs were created through inward investment, compared to 17,000 in indigenous firms. By 1990, non-indigenous firms accounted for 38.6% of manufacturing employment.

Large plants were often the most vulnerable. In 1973, 44.4% of manufacturing employees were in firms employing over 500, and another 21.1% in firms employing between 200 and 499. Fourteen of the largest firms closed with the loss of 20,000 jobs. These included five companies in the artificial fibre industry, which went from 'star performer' to almost total collapse in the space of a few years (Rowthorn & Wayne). The average size of externally-owned firms has declined from almost 249

employees in 1973, to 198 in 1990. But this is still significantly larger than the average indigenous firm, which is estimated to have well under 50 employees (NIEC, 1992b, p 27).

A high proportion of external investment continues to be in traditional industry: in 1990, 34% was in textiles and clothing; and 17% in food, drink and tobacco. British investment is particularly concentrated in textiles and clothing. Traditional industry has declined continuously since the 1950s (Table 4.7). By 1990, employment in the three main sectors was less than a quarter of its 1950 level.

Table 4.7 - Employment in Manufacturing (000s) 1950 to 1990

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	% change
shipbuilding	24.2	24.1	9.8	7.5	2.5	-89.7
textiles	72.8	58.0	44.8	25.0	9.5	-87.0
clothing	32.5	26.1	24.6	17.6	17.3	-46.8
total traditional	129.5	108.2	79.2	50.1	29.3	-77.4
total non-traditional	66.0	73.1	98.3	82.2	74.7	+13.0
total manufacturing	195.5	181.3	177.5	132.3	104.0	-46.8
Traditional as % of total	**66.2**	**59.7**	**44.6**	**37.9**	**28.2**	

Source, adapted from NIEC, July 1991a, p11.

The garment industry, in severe decline in the 1970s, stabilised in the 1980s, and employment in the 1990s is little short of its 1980 level. The industry is very diverse in terms of size of firms. There are a few large multinationals, while 65% of employment is in locally-owned firms employing less than 50. The 1980s have seen an increase in the number of small firms (McLaughlin & Ingram, 1991, pp2-3).

The period also saw the rise and fall of 'non-traditional' manufacturing. Employment rose by nearly 50% up to 1970, but in the subsequent two decades fell by 30%. It was when this sector went into decline that total manufacturing employment started to collapse. Electrical and instrument engineering makes up 18% of externally-owned

investment. Employment has declined since 1973 by over 45%, although it has increased since the trough of the mid-1980s.

The Decline of the Branch Plant Economy

The decline in manufacturing 'involved the heart of the modern branch plant sector' (Fothergill and Guy, 1990). Their study of branch closures covered 49 plants. The results suggest that peripherality was the major factor in the decision to close. Branch plants play a marginal role in most companies, and are the first to go in a recession. Although the plants which closed were large in Northern Ireland terms, their links with the local economy were underdeveloped. Most had few local roots; only 10% had R&D functions, and 12% HQ functions.

Other studies have pointed to the preponderance of low level functions in Northern Ireland plants. Only 24% of employees in manufacturing in 1987 were professional, technical or managerial and administrative, compared to 35% in Britain, creating a reliance on expatriates in top level jobs (ibid). McGuire, (1987) found that no scientists were employed in telecommunications plants in Northern Ireland. The mainly female production workers were most vulnerable to cuts in employment and restructuring in recession.

Fothergill & Guy conclude that the majority of plants in their study were closed due to general problems of the firm or industry, rather than reasons specific to Northern Ireland. But once a closure was decided upon, the peripherality of the Northern Ireland plants, and the extra costs of transport and organisation imposed by the location, made them vulnerable. The 'Troubles' accounted for only 4% of lost employment. They suggest however that this could be underestimated, since firms may be reluctant to give this as a reason.

An industrial strategy which concentrates on aid to new investors has brought in companies with little long term attachment to the Northern Ireland. State policy has not played an interventionist role in integrating them into the local economy. Fothergill & Guy argue that the firms do not plan a short stay, but because they do not build up a strong dependence on the local economy, and lack locally-based senior management, they are vulnerable.

Some of the new smaller externally owned firms have a better record of survival, but their impact on total employment is marginal. The most rapidly growing group has been new indigenously owned firms. 2,000 new companies were established between 1973 and 1986, employing 17,000, people (one in six of manufacturing employment). These firms rely more heavily on local markets and supplies, but are vulnerable to displacement by large multinationals (Gudgin et al, 1989).

Productivity

Productivity has remained below British levels, in spite of restructuring and cuts in employment which brought a rise in output per worker of 41% between 1973 and 1985 (Rowthorn & Wayne, p80). On the basis of the 1984 Census of Production, Hitchens & Birnie (1989) calculated that wages per employee in manufacturing were 89% of British levels, but that this was offset by a gross value added (GVA) of only 74%, which combined to give a relative unit labour costs of 121%. The 1989 Census of Production shows that per capita wages and salaries had fallen relatively, to less than 85% of the UK average, and were the lowest of any UK region. Net output and GVA per capita were also the lowest in the UK, but GVA had risen relative to the UK average, to just over 77%. Unit labour costs therefore remain considerably above British levels, but the difference has been reduced to 111.2%.

Table 4.8 - Wages and Productivity in Northern Ireland and UK, 1989

	NI as % of UK
Wages and salaries	84.5
Net output	75.3
GVA	77.2
Unit labour costs	112.0

Source: Calculated from Census of Production, 1989

There is wide variation between industries, but GVA is well below the UK average in the majority, and above it only in instrument engineering, food, and processing of rubber and plastics. The worst performer is motor vehicles and parts, where GVA per capita is 46.7% below the UK average. Hitchens & Birnie (1990) found productivity across a range of industry averaging 80% of the British level. He attributed a quarter of this

difference to concentration in low productivity industry. But even when other factors such as high energy and transport cost, and low economies of scale were included, only 50-60% of the difference was accounted for.

Fothergill & Guy's study found that low productivity was not a major factor in determining withdrawal of overseas investment. They suggest that where this was a factor it was generally associated with serious strikes. Subsidies to private companies offset higher unit costs. Grants equalled 25% of manufacturing output during the 1980s, or 20% if Harland & Wolf and Short Brothers, then in state ownership, were excluded (Hitchens & Birnie, op cit). Ford, the largest producer in the poorest performing sector, motor vehicles and parts, received over £7 million in the year 1990-91 (IDB Annual Report, 1991).

Productivity in non-UK companies is higher than in UK companies (British or Northern Irish). Non-UK plants accounted for 17% of employment in manufacturing, but 25% of net output, and 28% of gross value added (NIEC, 1992b, p16). Productivity differentials reflect higher levels of investment, with foreign companies accounting for 23% of net capital expenditure.

The Cost of Jobs

Jobs created through inward investment have been won at enormous cost. Between 1986-7 and 1991-2, the average cost of jobs promoted by the IDB through inward investment was £20,344, almost double the average male earnings of £12,800 (NIEC, 1992, p 53). Northern Ireland's incentives are generous in comparison with the EC, with only Italy's spending per head on regional grants higher (NIEC, 1990a, p20).

Table 4.9 - Cost of Jobs supported by the IDB, 1990-1

Type of job	Cost per employee (£)
Home Industry	14,216
Inward Investment	11,868
Renewed Jobs	6,146
Maintained Jobs	26,000

Source: IDB Annual Report, 1990-1

In 1990-1, the IDB spent £70,784,000 on grants, and £19,097,000 on promotion and administration. Twenty one private companies received more than a £1 million in Selective Assistance, which included grants for maintaining existing jobs as well as for promoting new ones (Table 4.9). The grant figures underestimate the true level of support, since firms also benefit from provision of infrastructure and factory sites, and concessions on rates and rent (Fothergill & Guy, op cit).

The proportion of IDB assistance going to existing companies has risen to 90% (NIERC, 1990a). The IBD claimed 3,366 jobs promoted in 1990-1, including only 258 through inward investment. The 1991-2 End of Year Statement claims 430 new jobs promoted through inward investment, against a target of 1,800. This included 350 'non-selective financial assistance jobs' for which it claims credit. Next year's targets are rather more cautious, with the aim of ten projects 'with potential for 1,800 new jobs'.

Job Promotion is itself a poor indicator of performance. It refers to expected job creation during the lifetime of a project: these jobs do not necessarily materialise. Indeed, firms have an incentive to exaggerate expected employment in applying for grants. The NIEC (1990a) estimated that between 1982/3 and 1987/8 only 40.5% of jobs promoted had been created (47.6% if the failed Lear Fan project is excluded). The performance of LEDU (71%) was substantially better in this period. In response to this criticism, the IDB now publishes figures for job creation.

Table 4.10 - Jobs created as a percentage of jobs promoted. 1986/7 - 1990/1

1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/1
79%	60%	58%	25%	12%

Source: IDB, Annual Report, 1990-1991

The report points out that the average period for planned build-up of jobs in a new project is three years, and those in later years have not yet reached their full potential. Nevertheless, while the year 1986/7 shows a high success rate, this dropped in the following year when according to this criterion plants should have been running at full capacity.

The success rate in achieving job promotion targets has been highly variable. Between 1982 and 1988, US firms achieved less than 10% of their planned targets, producing

the 'extraordinarily high' cost per job of £205,000. When Lear Fan is excluded, this fell to £31,000 (NIEC, 1992b, p 45).

Employment is often fairly short-lived. The NIEC (1985) in a study of maintained employment between 1971 and 1983 estimated that the average duration of projects was 4.6 years, and of employment only 3.8 years. The length of employment declined for successive annual cohorts; for those projects before June 1973 employment duration averaged 5.6 years, but this fell to 2.4 years for the 1979-80 cohort.

The figures assume there are no *deadweight* jobs, that is none of the jobs promoted/maintained would have existed without this degree of financial assistance. They also imply that each is a net addition, and does not crowd out jobs elsewhere in the economy. Gudgin & Roper (1990) claim that only a quarter of job promotions could be judged as net additions. On the other hand, the multiplier effect of subsidised employment can create other jobs, though the impact of this is reduced by the low Northern Ireland multiplier (see Chapter Three).

Private Services

As manufacturing has declined, services have become increasingly important, accounting for over half of private sector employment, compared to just over 40% in 1979.

Table 4.11 - Private Sector Employment, 1979-88

	1979		1988		%
	number	%	number	%	change
agriculture	21,050	6.6	19,550	6.8	- 7.1
manufacturing	131,350	41.2	93,450	32.4	-28.2
construction	37,750	11.8	26,400	9.2	-30.1
services	128,700	40.4	148,800	51.6	+15.6
Total	318,850	100	288,200	100	- 9.6

Source: NIEC, report 82, 1990b, p8

The fastest growing areas have been hotel and catering (45% increase between 1979 and 1988); business services (41%); and other services (20%). Telecommunications was privatised in the 1980s, so the 4,750 employed in 1988 represents a transfer from the public sector. Banking and insurance (3%) and retailing (6%) grew much more slowly, while employment in wholesale distribution and transport fell by 5% and 6% respectively (ibid, p11).

Although services now account for the majority of private employment, their performance is weak relative to Britain. Employment growth started to diverge substantially from Britain in 1985, with performance particularly poor in business services and in banking and insurance, two of the fastest growing employment areas in the UK (ibid, p20). A later NIEC report confirmed the poor performance relative to Britain in business services.

Table 4.12 - Increase in Private Financial Services Employment, March 1983-March 1991 (%)

SIC class	GB	NI
Banking & Finance	24.8	7.1
Insurance	16.9	3.3
Business Services	66.3	54.5
Renting of Movable	31.8	8.3
Owning & Dealing in Real Estate	29.4	22.2

Source: NIEC, 1992c, p63

Although service employment has substituted for manufacturing, it is ultimately dependent on productive activity in the local economy. Business and financial services are tied most directly to the level of business activity. The weakness of service activity within the manufacturing sector was noted above, while the decline in manufacturing itself limits the growth of associated service employment.

Financial services have been one of the main growth areas in the 1980s, particularly following deregulation of financial markets in the 1980s. But as a peripheral region of the UK Northern Ireland has little prospect of sharing permanently in that growth since it cannot develop as a centre itself. Its two major locally-based banks (Northern and Ulster) are subsidiaries of British banks, and the other major banks are based in the

Republic. Other financial institutions such as building societies, and insurance companies have headquarters outside Northern Ireland.

Possibilities for growth are determined by: the expansion of the local economy; the encouragement of national or international institutions to locate in Northern Ireland; and exports by local institutions (ibid). None provide much hope in the foreseeable future. Forecasts for the local economy predict slow growth over the next few years. There has been a small amount of inward investment in back-office tasks in insurance, but wages in banking are higher than in Britain and transfer of functions to Northern Ireland is unlikely. Both have seen a decline in male employment and an increase in female-dominated data processing. Since financial institutions in Northern Ireland are themselves branch plants, there is no real scope for export of services.

Services such as hotel and catering and retailing depend on the general level of spending, and are vulnerable during periods of recession. Nevertheless, the high proportion of two income households in Northern Ireland and the low house prices (relative to British levels) means that a large proportion of the population have high disposable incomes. During the 'Lawson boom', disposable incomes increased for a large proportion of the population, and with it demand for consumer goods and services. This has helped to bring about the re-generation of Belfast City Centre which has been central to government strategy during the past decade.

Urban Planning in Belfast

Belfast's commercial life ebbed away during the 1970s. Between 1969 and 1977, 300 shops and offices were bombed, with the loss of 25% of city centre retail space (McDonagh, 1992). Population and incomes fell with the decline of local industry and the transfer of manufacturing employment to the new growth centres outside Belfast. Retailing moved outside the centre, as supermarkets were built in the outskirts, and Belfast's social life concentrated in the ghettos, or for the more prosperous, in the suburbs.

The creation of the Belfast Enterprise Zone in 1981 marked a shift in official policy. The renaissance of Belfast city centre in the 1980s has been part of a planned 'return to normality'. Investment has been ploughed in to revitalise the retail core, while the

refurbishment of the Grand Opera House marks its development as an entertainment centre. In the official slogan *Belfast is Buzzing*.

Planning has involved substantial public support in providing planning policies to direct investment to the city centre; facilitating private sector investment; and marketing the city centre (Berry et al, 1991, p82). The Urban Development Grant, introduced in 1982, which provides 30% of total development costs (or up to 50% for enhanced UDG), and between 50 and 75% of construction costs and fees. By 1989, £42.9 million had been paid out (ibid, p83).

In the five years to September 1990, schemes totalling £161 million had been completed in the city centre, primarily office refurbishment and retail and catering development; schemes totalling £225 million were under way; and £172 million were in the pipe line.[7] The most important development is the Castle Court shopping precinct, the largest of its kind in Northern Ireland.

The driving force has been the attraction of foreign capital. Image is crucial, as the planners aim to

> *"cultivate neutral post-modernist images and spaces, which dilute the backward-looking symbolism all too evident in the present. The plan is thus, inescapably, part and parcel of British management of the Northern Ireland conflict" (Greer & Neill, 1991, p90).*

An urban motor way serves as a 'moat' (ibid p 102) cutting off the city centre from the neighbouring ghettos of the Falls and the Shankill. The expanse of open ground around the motorway makes it extremely difficult for the IRA to disappear into Catholic areas after planting bombs in the city centre. A security check is permanently stationed at the entrances to the city centre. The brightness of the city centre is in stark contrast to the gloom of the narrow streets off the Falls Road, where lighting is kept deliberately low to allow soldiers to move about unseen (McDonagh, 1992).

Outside the city centre, the symbols of territoriality remain. Paving stones are painted in green white and orange, or red white and blue, and corresponding slogans adorn the walls in Irish or English.

These do not represent merely a symbolic alienation from the carefully contrived management of the centre. Massive unemployment reflects a level of economic

deprivation greater than any British city. West Belfast lost 9,4300 jobs between 1976 and 1988 (Rolston & Tomlinson). According to official figures, unemployment in Catholic West Belfast was 39% in 1985 (46.5% for men); the equivalent rates for Protestant West Belfast were 30.1% and 35%. [8]

A new programme, *Making Belfast Work* was announced with great fanfare in 1988, but the funding is dwarfed by the spending to support private investment in the city centre. In the first year £10 million was available for the most 'disadvantaged areas of the city', with a further £55 million for the next three years.[9] In 1990, the Northern Ireland Office announced spending of £22.5 million for 1990/1, half as much again as in the previous year.[10]

Schemes of this size can have little impact on an area where unemployment is so deeply rooted, and where at the same time, other government policies are sharpening economic and social problems. The programme is clearly part of a political strategy of winning the Catholic community away from the IRA, and more generally from Republican sympathies. The government calls for the involvement of "everyone who has a genuine interest in progress",[11] but according to Obair

> *"it transpires that the government's claim to have the consent of the people for its plans rests on the exclusion of critics as not genuinely interested in development."12*

Public Sector Employment

With Direct Rule, the link between local tax revenue and public expenditure was broken. Spending was based on an estimate of need, using British standards (Canning et al, 1987, p225). In December 1991, public sector employment stood at 201,315, 38% of the total (NIEC, 1992a, p24). This represents a fall from its peak in the mid 1980s. In 1988, private sector employment accounted for two out of three jobs in Britain, compared to only 56% in Northern Ireland (NIEC, 1990b, p15).

Table 4.13 - Public and Private Sector Employment, 1960-1988

	1960		1974		1988	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Private Sector	352,200	78.4	333,750	65.9	288,200	56.3
Public Sector	97,100	21.6	173,050	34.1	223,900	43.7
Total	449,300		506,800		512,100	

Source: adapted from NIEC, 1990b, p7

During the 1970s, public expenditure per capita rose rapidly both absolutely and relative to British levels (Table 4.14). Economic deprivation and the high dependency ratio increased demands on social spending. There was a period of 'catching up' with British levels of provision. The peripheral location increases the cost of transport and administration; and 'security' represents an additional major area of expenditure. As the NIEC argues, "strict adherence to the principle of comparability many not reflect these additional needs" (ibid, p36). When these are taken into account, public spending is only marginally above British levels (Morrissey & Gaffikin, p80). For example, in June 1990, over 10% of employees were in public administration or defence, almost as many as in education, and more than those employed in health. When similar programmes are compared, Northern Ireland's share of UK public expenditure is seen to have fallen from 3.9% in 1987-8, to 3.5% in 1992-1993 (NIEC, 1992, p36).

Table 4.14 - Public Spending per capita in Northern Ireland (England = 100)

1959-60	88
1962-63	92
1965-66	97
1968-69	103
1971-72	111
1974-75	112
1976-77	136
1977-78	141

Source: Treasury Needs Assessment Study, 1979 (quoted in Simpson (1983))

The share of health, education and public administration in total employment rose rapidly after Direct Rule, from 25% in 1971 to over 38% by 1983, more than double

its 1951 share. But the rise in public spending has also been driven by the weakness of the private sector, particularly manufacturing, and the political situation. This rise was reversed in the second half of the 1980s. Public sector employment fell by 8,708 between 1983 and 1990, almost all of it (over 8,000) male. Most of the fall came in two areas: 'bodies under the aegis of the Northern Ireland government', which includes health and education; and public corporations as a result of privatisation. Northern Ireland Central Government showed a slight increase, but if the 5% increase in the prison and police services is excluded, employment in this area fell. Total employment has continued to fall, to 201,315 in December 1991 (NIEC, 1992a, p24).

Table 4.15 - Public employment by sector, 1983-1990

	1983			1990			
	m	f	Total	m	f	Total	%change
NI Central government	34,676	13,349	48,025	34,011	14,366	48,377	+0.7
(RUC & prison)	15,234	3,059	18,293	15,885	3,321	19,206	+5.0
Bodies under the aegis of NI central govt	29,836	93,195	123,031	27,300	91,749	119,049	-3.0
UK central govt	3,502	2,744	6,246	3,507	2,810	6,317	+1.0
Local govt	7,796	2,221	10,017	6,624	3,015	9,639	-4.0
public corps	20,331	5,077	25,408	16,681	3,956	20,637	-19
Total	96,141	116,586	212,727	88,123	115,896	204,019	-4.0

Source: Northern Ireland Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1992

The extent of employment growth in services (both public and private) must be viewed with caution. A large part of the expansion, particularly of women's employment, has been in part-time work, so the net effect on total hours worked is much lower than the number of employees would suggest. Trewsdale has estimated that if part-time employees are weighted as half a full-time employee, there was no increase in jobs between 1971 and 1986.[13]

While public employment has fallen, public expenditure has risen to support private employment. Half of public spending goes on transfer payments and social spending. By 1983, only 54% of expenditure was financed from Northern Ireland taxation (Canning et al p223). The public sector deficit (the 'subvention') was estimated at approximately 25% of GDP in 1987 (Gudgin & Roper, 1990). This is greater than the regional imbalance in production of goods and services, due to a capital outflow in the form of pension funds, company profits, estimated as approximately 5% of GDP (ibid).

The sectoral shares of public spending and the distribution of public sector employment has taken specific forms, since

> *"the government must work through the particular form the British state takes in the province" (O'Dowd, 1987, p184).*

The two communities interact with each other via the state, and are incorporated into the state in different ways. There are specifically 'Catholic women's jobs' in the state sector (such as nursing) and 'Protestant men's jobs' (security services). Public employment has been shaped by sectarian and gender divisions, but it has also been important in reproducing and transforming these divisions.

Economic Prospects

The NIEC's latest Economic Assessment (April 1992) contains

> *"what is probably the most gloomy assessment of the Northern Ireland economy that the Council has produced since the last recession in the early 1980s" (NIEC, 1992a, pp49-50).*

The optimism of its previous assessment had been tempered by acknowledgement that the relatively good performance was due more to underlying weaknesses - comparatively small manufacturing sector, low export propensity, high public support for the private sector - than strengths (NIEC, 1991). By 1992, these weakness had ceased to protect the economy from the impact of the UK recession, which hit Northern Ireland with increased force.

Gudgin & Roper (1990) forecast an annual rate of growth of 1.8% between 1989 and 1995, compared to 3.4% from 1984 to 1990. They predict that unemployment will

remain above 14% throughout the first half of the 1990s, while job creation will reach only 1,000 per annum, compared to 3,000 between 1984 and 1990.

But even this small increase will not take 1,000 people off the unemployment register: expansion in employment increases labour force participation and reduces migration. Traditionally, migration has disguised the real level of unemployment: between 1973 and 1986, it represented an equivalent of one eighth of the working population (ibid). According to NIERC's estimates, creation of three jobs is necessary to take one person off the register, compared to two in Britain. These estimates assume a continued annual migration of over five per thousand, and a decline in the participation ratio.

The Northern Ireland economy is characterised by huge dependence on state subsidies; a decline in industrial capacity, particularly with the loss of multinational investment; and the predominance of service employment, the majority of which is tied to government spending. A reduction of subsidy would have to be matched by a spectacular increase in industrial output and productivity or it would involve cuts in living standards which would be politically unacceptable (Teague, 1989). The branch plant economy is particularly vulnerable, and there have been some spectacular failures. Although there has been an attempt to target industrial policy, there is little sign yet that the agencies have learnt to "pick winners" (Canning et al 1987).

While most economic commentators share these depressing prognostications, they differ in their proposals for the way forward. These programmes are influenced by the view they hold about the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, although this may not be made explicit. There is one general area of agreement: economists tend to favour a continuation of government support, and are more sympathetic to Keynesian-inspired policies than to reliance on pure market forces.

Gudgin and the economists at the NIERC favour greater integration with the UK economy, pinning their hopes on recovery in Britain. They favour measures to improve competitiveness while increasing the mobility of labour, including migration, through improved information and training. Teague (1987) on the other hand favours greater integration with the Republic of Ireland initially through coordination of industrial policy and improvement of communications between the two. He sees this as a process of 'rolling integration' (p180) which would not depend on prior political change. This position is remarkably similar to that put forward by the Chairman of the Ulster Bank in a recent speech to businessmen from both sides of the Border. He suggested that

significant progress had been made in transport and communications to facilitate the growing cross-border trade, and argued for increased inter-government support for private initiatives. But he stressed that

> *"making a reality of the island economy is dependent on there being no political agendas, overt or hidden."* [14]

Canning et al (1987) also argue against the desirability of changing the constitutional position. They look to policy changes within Northern Ireland itself, rather than to Ireland as a whole, for improvements in economic prospects.

> *"It is possible to pursue a realistic economic policy in Northern Ireland aimed at long-run economic recovery despite the troubles" (p235)*

They favour an industrial policy which concentrates on sectors with long-term potential for growth. A similar position is adopted by the NIEC. They argue that in order to ensure that resources produce the highest return, this process

> *"cannot be left to the efforts of private industry and the workings of the marketplace with absolute confidence in the outcome" (p76).*

While some of their work is critical of existing government policy, they do not raise questions about the political position. Rowthorn & Wayne on the other hand, although suggesting the possibility of some improvement within present structures, argue that

> *"To be fully effective, any measures intended to stimulate the province's economy must be accompanied by political initiatives to end the conflict" (p125).*

Conclusion

Economic policy in Northern Ireland, even under Direct Rule, is conditioned by the structures created at partition. While much economic analysis treats the 'Troubles' as an 'external factor' economic policy is inseparable from the political situation which gave rise to them.

The creation of the state reflected a particular configuration of class and economic interests, and rested on a particular level of accumulation. The economic base for the

state was already beginning to weaken at the time of partition. The years of Direct Rule have seen a further erosion of that base, and increasing dependence on British economic support. The most widespread consensus in Northern Ireland's political life rests on support for continued public spending.

The limits to accumulation within existing boundaries have led to a tentative search for solutions which move outside the present structures. But the fear on the part of proponents of this strategy of any explicit political agenda reflects the continuing irreconcilability of the divisions which the Northern Ireland state entrenched. It remains doubtful whether any substantial progress can be made without tackling the root of these differences.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. "The paradigmatic productive unit, then was the *Fordist* factory, where standardized consumer goods were mass-produced by semi-skilled operatives subject to detailed *Taylorist* supervision. The trajectory of advance was to raise output per worker through progressive mechanization and an ever more detailed sub-division of labour along the assembly lines. ... *Keynesian* demand management which guaranteed the high sales volumes needed to maintain profitability while being itself sustained by the dynamic response of productivity to output growth which ... gave such policies a development significance beyond short-run stabilization. Thus Coriat sees Frederick Taylor, Henry Ford and John Maynard Keynes as a closely united triumvirate." (Grahl & Teague, 1989, p37, *my emphasis*)

2. The first five of these are discussed in Elliott and Wilford, 1987, pp 295-303

3. In the 1992 general election, Unionist Parties received an average of 50.93% of the vote; nationalist parties (SDLP and Sinn Fein) an average of 31.62%. Between them, these parties accounted for 82.5% of the total vote. Of the rest, the majority (9.56%) went to the middle of the road 'non-sectarian' Alliance Party. But the party gained its highest votes in strongly Protestant constituencies, in which the SDLP did not put up candidates (East Belfast 29.76%; Antrim East 23.27%; Strangford 16.94%). The next largest share (6.1%) went to the Conservative Party which also won its highest votes in constituencies without nationalist candidates. It seems plausible that Catholics in these constituencies would have voted for a 'non sectarian' candidate rather than a Unionist Party.

4. The New Ireland Forum was established by the main political parties in the South, on the initiative of the SDLP, in 1983. The Forum produced a report in 1984 detailing a number of alternative constitutional proposals for Irish unity.

5. Quoted by M. Tomlinson, speaking at a conference entitled Is West Belfast Working ? organised by West Belfast Economic Forum, June 1990

6. Douglas Hurd, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said on June 27th 1985

> *"there are cases in which some community groups, or persons prominent in the direction or management of some community groups, have sufficiently close links with paramilitary organisations to give rise to a grave risk that to give support to those groups would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly. I do not consider that any such use of government funds would be in the public interest, and in any particular case in which I am satisfied that these conditions prevail, no grant will be paid." (Quoted in Obair, Briefing Paper no 4, November 1990).*

In March 1992, shortly before the general election, the Irish language organisation Glor no nGael had its funding restored after a major public campaign against political vetting (Irish News, 28th March, 1992).economic issues.

7. Unpublished figures, from Department of Planning, Queen's University, Belfast

8. 'Socio-Economic Conditions in West and North Belfast' (p6) in *Making Belfast Work*, Northern Ireland Office, 1988

9. Obair, Briefing Paper no 1 (undated) *The Making Belfast Work Initiative*, p 1

10. Press statement, Northern Ireland Information Service, 9th April, 1990.

11. ibid, p 4.

12. Obair, Briefing Paper no 1, p 2

13. Seminar paper on part-time employment by Janet Trewsdale, Queens University, Belfast, 20th March, 1992.

14. Dr W. Quigley *Ireland, an Island Economy*, 1992

Equal Opportunities Legislation and Direct Rule

Introduction

Since the abolition of Stormont,

> *"the Government of Northern Ireland has been under the direct authority of British Ministers and civil servants who have not been directly associated with either of the two sections of the community in Northern Ireland and who might be expected to have been free from any religious or political partiality of the kind alleged under previous Unionist administrations" (Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights (SACHR), 1987, p13).*

Most British politicians assumed that a 'neutral' administration independent of the sectarian structures of the Unionist state would be able to overcome sectarian division.

But the social democratic foundations of British public policy in that period, or what Osborne and Cormack (1983) call the "new liberalism", was ill-equipped to deal with the Northern Ireland situation. Social democracy presumes a basic consensus which gives state policy legitimacy. This consensus was notably lacking in Northern Ireland, and as Osborne & Cormack themselves point out, the 'new' liberal voice had rarely been heard. Some academics were content with this situation. Boal notes that

> *"many of the gains in working-class conditions in Northern Ireland, certainly since the Second World War, occurred without the need (sic) for combined working-class action in Northern Ireland itself" (cited in ibid p19).*

The profound ignorance which characterised British politicians in relation to Northern Ireland led them to underestimate the depth of sectarian division. The Cameron

Commission established in 1969 to investigate the causes of civil unrest had accepted that discrimination against Catholics in jobs and housing

> *"had substantial foundation in fact and were in a very real sense an immediate and operative demonstrations and consequent disorders" (cited in McCormack & O'Hara, 1990, p1)*

But subsequent legislation

> *"was a response to the perception of discrimination which was widespread in the Catholic population, rather than a recognition of the reality of that discrimination as it had been by the Cameron Commission. (ibid, p1)*

The view prevailed that

> *"Institutions would be necessary in the transition period to mop up the residual elements of sectarian practice, but in the long run technocracy needed no reformist institutions directly geared towards eradicating sectarianism" (Rolston, 1983, p199).*

But these hopes proved illusory. The Catholic/Protestant differential in unemployment remained as high in the 1980s as it had been in the early 1970s (SACHR, 1987), a graphic illustration of continuing division. The series of reforms which belatedly granted the main demands of the Civil Rights movement did not put an end to resistance to British rule. The armed struggle of the Provisional IRA has continued for over twenty years. Although its intensity has varied, and the level of active and passive support has ebbed and flowed, the government has not succeeded in isolating the Provisionals from its core of support, or broader sections of the Catholic community from Republican sympathies.

Political and economic crisis has forced the current Conservative administration into a number of policies which are inconsistent with each other, and contradict some of its most cherished neoliberal positions. While working class Catholics, particularly women, have suffered disproportionately from Thatcherite polices, legislation to combat religious discrimination has been strengthened. The Fair Employment Commission has been given powers to monitor the religious composition of employment, and to enforce contract compliance, a practice made illegal in Britain on the grounds that it interferes with market forces.

Pressure to strengthen anti-discriminatory legislation came not only from internal developments, but through international action, particularly from the powerful Irish lobby in North America. Shareholder campaigns have led some US-owned companies to adopt anti-discriminatory employment practices in advance of the legislation.

Legislation on religious and sex discrimination has been separate, as has the operation of the bodies charged with promoting sex equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland (EOCNI) and religious equality, the Fair Employment Commission (FEC) formerly the Fair Employment Agency (FEA). Until the Fair Employment Act of 1989, powers in relation to religious discrimination were weaker than those on sex discrimination. The 1989 Act strengthened the revamped FEC, and though critics argue that it does not go far enough (for example McCormack & O'Hara, 1990), its powers considerably exceed those of the EOCNI.

The British Sex Discrimination Act (imported to Northern Ireland in 1976) and the Race Relations Act share an "almost identical statutory framework" (Gregory, 1987, p1). The Race Relations Act does not apply in Northern Ireland. The small but growing black and ethnic minority population receives no specific protection in law. A campaign for the extension of legislation against racial discrimination begun with a conference in 1991.[1]

This framework was not followed in the first Fair Employment Act of 1976, which did not for example outlaw *indirect discrimination*. The 1989 Act, on the other hand, gave the FEC many powers for which those concerned with sexual and racial discrimination have been campaigning. But the government has been reluctant to discuss extending these powers to other areas, or "over the water" (Cormack & Osborne, op cit),

> ***"preferring to confine the measures and depict them as of relevance only to Northern Ireland's "special" problems of sectarianism" (Maxwell, 1991 p91).***

The continued separation of the two bodies was a response to lobbying from the EOCNI, which feared that sex discrimination would be given low priority in a joint equalities body (Osborne and Cormack, 1989). The SACHR report of 1987 recommended that the

> ***"separate bodies operating in the areas of religion and sex should in future be encouraged to co-operate in certain respects" (SACHR, 1987 p81)***

The two bodies shared offices when they were first established and there was some formal liaison through the Chairs of each organisation sitting on the board of the other. But this contact had little impact on the work of either body.[2] The offices are now separate, although within a few doors of each other, and their work has tended to follow different paths.

This chapter will discuss the provisions of equal opportunities legislation in Northern Ireland, and the experience of its implementation. The legislation, and the agencies it established, have many critics. The FEA/FEC in particular has been the subject of heated public debate. These criticisms also raise wider questions about the possibility of successful reform within Northern Ireland.

Fair Employment Legislation

The first anti-discrimination legislation was enacted with the foundation of the Northern Ireland state. Section Five of the government of Ireland Act 1920 provided that Parliament could not legislate

> *"so as either directly or indirectly to establish or endow any religion or prohibit or restrict the free exercise or give a preference, privilege or advantage, or impose any disability or disadvantage on account of religious belief or religious or ecclesiastical status" (SACHR, 1987 p 8).*

This formal position made little difference to the way the state operated in practice. The safeguard was invoked only once, in 1929. Catholics had so little trust in the possibility of receiving justice from the Stormont regime that this article remained virtually a dead letter. The British government refused to respond to complaints against the Stormont authorities, and did nothing to ensure that the principle was adhered to (see Chapter Three). But as the civil rights movement developed into a mass civil resistance campaign, provoking international concern, it was forced to intervene. The principle of equality was articulated in what became known as the 'Downing Street Declaration':

> *"every citizen of Northern Ireland is entitled to the same equality of treatment and freedom from discrimination as obtains in the rest of the United Kingdom irrespective of political views or religion" (para 6, 20th August 1969).*

Action was promised on public employment; incitement to hatred; fairness in public housing; redress against public bodies; electoral reform. This led to a series of reforms,[3]

both before and after Direct rule. But the Fair Employment Act of 1976 was the first to deal specifically with employment. A Working Party was established in 1972, chaired by the employment minister, Van Straubenzee, to

> *"consider what steps, whether in regard to law or practice, should be taken to counter religious discrimination where it may exist in the private sector of employment in Northern Ireland" (SACHR, p11).*

The report expressed no view on the reality or extent of discrimination, declaring

> *"It was not our function to pass judgement upon what may or may not have happened in employment practices in the past" (cited in Cormack & Osborne, 1983, p18).*

The Committee believed some legal machinery was necessary to outlaw discrimination, and to support an equal opportunities policy "resting on upon the vision of an open, free and just society" (cited in McCormack & O'Hara, p23). But it proposed that discrimination should be dealt with primarily on an individual basis through the civil courts. Influenced by US experience, it proposed *positive action* to increase Catholic representation in employment, but opposed all forms of quotas which it described as 'immoral'.

> *"In short, it attempted to provide a blueprint for equality which apportioned no blame and to which no fair-minded person could object." (ibid, p24).*

This sentence encapsulates the reasons for the failure of the legislation in the face of structural sectarianism.

Although the committee's report was published in 1973, legislation was delayed until 1976. Most of its recommendations were incorporated into the Fair Employment Act, but its scope was extended to include the public sector.

The 1976 Fair Employment Act

The main provisions of the Act included:

1. *The establishment of a Fair Employment Agency (FEA) under the Department of Economic Development, with a predicted annual budget of £280,000, and a staff of 40.*

2. *The prohibition of 'unlawful discrimination' in employment. Individual complaints to be investigated and adjudicated by the FEA. Other acts, such as discriminatory job advertisements, were declared unlawful.*

3. *The FEA was empowered to carry out investigations of employment practices of individual employers, and to recommend affirmative action*

4. *The FEA was required to promote equality of opportunity, through dissemination of a Guide to Manpower Policy issued by the DED, and a 'Declaration of Principle and Intent' which employers were to be encouraged to sign (this was not made compulsory).*

5. *Exemptions were made for large groups of employees, including clergymen, teachers, and the security services. Other employers could apply for exemption on the grounds of 'security' considerations.*

The FEA had few friends in Northern Ireland. As Cormack and Osborne (1983) put it,

> ***"It is fair to say that the FEA and the policies out of which it arose, do not enthuse and excite the minds of most politicians in Northern Ireland" (p19).***

Unionist politicians and such bodies as the Chamber of Commerce expressed varying degrees of hostility to the legislation in principle, and only 10 of the 26 District Councils had publicly declared support for the principle of equal opportunities by 1988. The term 'reverse discrimination' was applied to any attempt to increase Catholic representation, even though quotas were rigorously excluded from the legislative framework.

> ***"When there has been long-standing inequality any concrete step to counter it necessarily appears as 'reverse discrimination' to the holders of ancient privileges" (Goldring, p57).***

Nationalist politicians, even those on the constitutional wing, were sceptical of its probable effectiveness. In Northern Ireland, where politics had centred around the constitutional question, it was unlikely that Catholics would look to a state body to redress their grievances.

But those people who both wanted to see legislation work and believed that it could, were also often severely critical of the Act, and of the operation of the FEA. Christopher McCrudden, who carried out an inquiry into the staffing and administration of the Agency, concluded

> *"The experience of the legal enforcement of the FEA is therefore a depressing picture of a massive task, of the possibility of change, but of an Agency which has failed to meet that challenge" (McCrudden, 1983, p220).*

Criticism has covered a wide range of issues. Some have argued for strengthened legislation. Others have concluded that the FEA's failure proves that Northern Ireland is irreformable. The distinction between these positions can be blurred: Graham (1984) argues both that "it is a fallacy to assume that Equal Opportunities institutions have had or can have any positive impact on patterns of inequality in NI"; and that the "history of the Agency has been one of complete failure, lost opportunity, and a total lack of credibility" (p 43).

A Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) had been established in 1973 to advise the secretary of state on the law on religious discrimination. In 1985, in response to mounting evidence of the failure of reform, the Commission informed the Secretary of State of its intention to carry out

> *"a review of the adequacy and effectiveness of existing laws and institutions in securing freedom from discrimination and furthering equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland" (SACHR, 1987 p2).*

It commissioned a study from an independent research body, the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), on the extent of inequality. The report, based on the latest official labour market figures and a new survey of workplaces practices, pointed to continuing major inequalities on the basis of religion.

While SACHR itself steered a neutral path, its report detailed a series of criticisms which had been made both of the legislation and the operation of the FEA, together with the

FEA's response. It made 123 detailed recommendations arising from the review. Concern centred on the following areas.

a) A lack of Strategic Direction and administrative control

Donald Graham, (1984) a former FEA staff member, writes of

> *"Agency sloth, ineptitude, incompetence, the absence of any political will by government or the Agency and an overriding desire not to offend vested interests inside and outside the boardroom" (p42).*

He describes a series of disputes between the FEA chair, board members and staff, which culminated in McCrudden's investigation. Graham's attack is wide-ranging, displaying the anger generated in a bitter internal dispute. He concludes that even strengthened legislation could have little effect on sectarianism. His criticisms of FEA administration are echoed in more measured tones by others who believe that Northern Ireland is reformable through strengthened and properly implemented equal opportunities legislation.

A striking failure was that the Agency never developed to the size envisaged in the Act. The initial budget in 1977 was only £81,000, (less than a third of the expected level), and did not exceed the original estimate in money terms until ten years later, after the SACHR investigation. The staff was then increased to 20, still only half that envisaged in the legislation, reaching 31 in its last year. The FEA claimed that the Department of Finance and Personnel held up authorisation of new staff, but its general response was apologetic. Rather than fight for increased spending on the grounds of the importance of the work which needed doing, it defended itself from Unionist attack on the grounds that it did not cost very much.

The Agency was also criticised for lacking a clear set of goals and timetables. It refused to adopt the numerical goals in appointments which the Van Straubenzee Committee following US experience, had recommended. The staff did not have clearly defined job areas. As Graham's contribution illustrates, this situation led to demoralisation and frustration. McCrudden (1983) also suggests that

> *"The current assumption of the Agency appears to be that there are severe limitations to what can be done to increase equality of opportunity in a situation of economic decline" (p218)*

SACHR points to a lack of clarity in the criteria used to decide to launch company investigations, and differences in the range of coverage of investigations. McCrudden argued

> *"most investigations, however, have seldom been part of a coherent plan thought out in advance and followed consistently" (ibid p212)*

This partly resulted from the staff's own lack of experience of working in an equal opportunities framework, which was so alien to the predominant culture in the Northern Ireland labour market. In the 1980s, the number of investigations and the range of issues taken up increased. Reports were produced more quickly and are publicly available. A number of more general research reports were commissioned which provide valuable evidence of the extent and patterns of disadvantage.

b) Failure to pursue individual complaints effectively

Problems in this area arise, as in sex discrimination cases, due to limitations of the legislation. In particular the individual nature of the complaints procedure places the burden of proof on the complainant, and imposes a heavy cost in time and emotional energy on complainants. The first Fair Employment legislation did not outlaw indirect discrimination. It was not sufficient to show that a better qualified person had been turned down for a job: intentionality had to be proved. Underrepresentation of Catholics in a workplace could not be used as evidence of discrimination. This form of legislation is quite ill-equipped to deal with structural sectarianism which does not depend on individual acts of discrimination.

In the Agency's first four years, only 216 complaints were received. By the end of March 1981, it had made 10 findings of discrimination (McCrudden, 1983). Of 605 investigations between 1976 and 1988, 52 (8.6%) were upheld. But the County Court was reluctant to support even this tiny number of complainants. Of 20 cases decided up to May 1988, the FEA's finding was overturned in 9 appeals by the respondent, but only one where the appeal came from the complainant. The FEA's finding was upheld in 5 appeals by the complainant, and 5 by the respondent (McCormack & O'Hara, p30).

Critics argue that the problems lay not only with the legislation, but with the FEA. The barrister in charge of complaints claimed that the success rate could have been

increased from 7% to 20%, on the basis of evidence collected by the Agency, according to an undated memorandum quoted by Graham (1984, pp44-5).

SACHR criticises the close association of investigation and adjudication functions in the FEA, with the same staff involved in both. The Agency was required to be impartial at the initial hearing, but to defend the decision at appeal. This confusion of roles inhibited the FEA from publicising the results of cases. The respondent was guaranteed anonymity even if found guilty of discrimination. This seriously weakened the pressure that the FEA was able to place on employers. Many involved in sex discrimination cases have seen the main benefit from litigation as the indirect effect it has in pressurising employers to improve practices (Maxwell, p75).[4]

An individual complaints system is quite inadequate to deal with the horizontal and vertical religious segregation in Northern Ireland. The "chill factor" prevents people applying for jobs in certain areas or firms. As Cooper explains

> *"the bulk of complaints .... come not from the areas of employment where the grossest imbalances take place but from areas where both communities have access to employment" (cited in Booth & Bertsch, 1989, p38).*

Moreover, a major obstacle to the successful pursual of complaints in Northern Ireland is the widespread distrust among the disadvantaged community of any state body. But unless the Commission is seen as a body worth trusting with complaints, it cannot operate effectively (Graham,op cit, p53).

The general picture is of reluctance by individuals to make complaints; reluctance by the FEA to make findings of discrimination; and reluctance of the courts to uphold these findings.

c) Preference for persuasion rather than for using the full range of legal remedies.

Rolston (1983) describes Agency members as

> *"middle-of-the road types, businessmen, trade unionists, etc, all of them government-appointed, and most of them appointed on the basis of their respectability. Such people are undoubtedly inclined to move in the same ideological and political (not to mention social) space as many of the respondents with whom they deal" (p212)*

Their natural inclination is to smooth things over and come to agreement, rather than to become involved in formal legal proceedings. There was also, particularly in the early days, a marked distaste for publicising the results of investigations, which were not seen as

> *"a contribution to public debate. Their target audience is not the public, but the employers investigated, and the investigations thus become part of the refined and 'gentlemanly' discourse between employers and Agency members" (ibid p215).*

This approach was justified by the Chairman on the grounds that the co-operation of employers was necessary in order to help them develop better practices, since the legislation did not give much power of enforcement (SACHR, p122). But proceeding from an approach which lacked clear goals and targets, the process was ad hoc and open to abuse.

SACHR reports criticism that too little attention had been paid to investigations into the private sector in the early 1980s. The public sector was thought to be an easier target, even though some (for example the Southern Health and Social Services Board) refused to assist with monitoring (ibid, p115).

The FEA was often reluctant to state explicitly whether its investigations had shown that discrimination existed. The report of an investigation into the *Belfast Telegraph* hints that the paper had failed to provide equality of opportunity, but the affirmative action programme agreed with the Agency recorded only that it had "confirmed its equal opportunity policy and its compliance with the requirement of the 1976 Act" (McCormack and O'Hara, p31). The Agency explained its reluctance to publicise instances of discrimination by arguing that it did not want to discourage minorities from applying to these employers. But SACHR concluded that a reassessment of the strategy was essential.

> *"Though there are some employers who are undoubtedly hostile to legal intervention, there are a greater number who frankly recognise that encouraging provision of equality of opportunity by legal means is both necessary and important" (p125).*

The Declaration of Intent did not give formal powers, but even within its limitations, it was not used effectively. The certificate was not removed from a single employer. It has been argued that it was used by employers to deflect scrutiny rather than as a means of developing progressive policies (Booth & Bertsch, p35). So seriously was it

taken, that the FEA chose a printer for its own *Guide to Manpower Policy* who had not signed the Declaration (Rolston, op cit, p216).

d) The FEA bowed to pressure from local and British politicians.

While complaining about its alleged anti-Protestant bias, Unionist politicians have been quick to demand that the FEA investigate complaints by Protestants against Catholic employers (ibid, pp217-9). Graham describes how an anonymous complaint against a small Catholic firm was passed on by the Democratic Unionist leader, Ian Paisley. Government ministers demanded an inquiry, which was carried out by the FEA Chair. According to Graham, procedures were breached, with a copy of the report going to Paisley before the Agency board (op cit, pp46-7).

In defending itself against Unionist attack, the FEA has been defensive. Not wanting to appear to favour either side, it has been accused of being more rigorous in pursuit of Catholic firms in which Protestants are under-represented than of discrimination against Catholics.

While intervention by Unionists is to be expected, more worrying is interference by ministers of the government in whose name the FEA is supposed to combat discrimination. This calls into question the whole relation between equal opportunities legislation and the state.

There have been well documented cases of ministerial attempts to block investigations in both public and private sectors. The FEA delayed an investigation of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) at the request of the minister, Hugh Rossi (SACHR, p116). Although an analysis in 1972 had shown that Protestants occupied 95% of all senior posts in the NICS (Graham, 1983, p66), the investigation only went ahead when the Dublin-based Hibernia magazine exposed what it described as a "sinister attempt at ministerial blackmail" (ibid p67). Even then, though the initial investigation found a failure to afford equality of opportunity, the report was revised in the light of figures provided by NICS itself (Booth & Bertsch, p39).

The concern of ministers in relation to the private sector appears to have been with the image projected overseas. Fear of offending actual or potential investors was behind the attempt by the Department of Manpower Services to block investigations into Ford and

Short Brothers in 1979 (McCrudden, 1983). Graham writes of an inquiry in the Engineering Industry which begun in 1977, but was still incomplete in 1983. The final report was published in 1983. The continuing equation of Catholics with disloyalty is evident in the report by Cooper of his meeting with Labour's Northern Ireland minister, Don Concannon:

> *"What the Minister wished to make clear was the importance of Ford in NI...Minister is anxious that the Agency's investigation should not cause any security problems" (Graham, 1984, p48).*

Pressures occurred under both Labour and Tory governments. They demonstrate a lack of commitment of both parties to pressing for real change. Far from supporting the FEA in tackling discrimination, they undermined its work. Very little public support was given to anti-discrimination measures. On the contrary, the impression was given that the problem had been sorted out.

While the rhetoric of fairness was used, the national security exemption left intact the repressive apparatus. By issuing a statement that a particular action was necessary on national security grounds, the Minister was able to prevent any potentially embarrassing investigation. The FEA remained subordinate to the Department of Economic Development (DED), which controlled its budget and its staffing. The DED is part of the NICS, and the history of its own FEA investigation did not create much confidence in its impartiality.

Pressure for Change

As the above discussion suggests, the initiative for re-evaluating the Fair Employment legislation did not come from the British government's own concern at lack of progress. Most commentators agree that the crucial factor was international pressure, especially from the United States. Only one significant measure was enacted before the US campaign developed. In 1981, firms tendering for government contracts were required to comply with Fair Employment practices. This strengthened the potential for using investigations as a means of increasing equality.

Osborne and Cooper (1989) argue that the success of some FEA action in revealing patterns of inequality was also important. When it was eventually carried out, the NICS investigation revealed a profile of inequality at all levels. The Civil Service established

a monitoring system, (a major feature of the new legislation), and since 1986 has published an annual Equal Opportunities Report. But the failure to produce goals and targets weakens its effectiveness, while it has been argued that the credibility of the policy is undermined by the fact that it is self-monitoring, with the Equal Opportunities Unit part of the NICS itself (McCormack & O'Hara, p32).

In 1986 a DED consultative paper officially acknowledged the religious differential in unemployment rates for the first time. The SACHR report added weight to the pressure for change, through its critique of existing legislation, and the inequalities revealed in the PSI survey. The report concluded with a call for an interim target of reducing the male unemployment differential from 2 and a half to 1 and a half in 5 years (p42).

Most important was the U.S. campaign initiated by the Irish American lobby. The politics of shareholder pressure is well established in the United States, and had been used against Apartheid in South Africa. This experience was used in the campaign to pressurise firms investing in Northern Ireland to tackle discrimination.

The Irish lobby had been active on the issue since the late seventies. In 1978, the Washington-based *Irish National Caucus* raised the question of discrimination in the US Congress. Added impetus came from the international publicity surrounding the IRA Hunger Strikes of 1981. In 1984, Shorts was a leading bidder for a US government defence contract. The Irish lobby campaigned to prevent the company being awarded the contract on the grounds of its history of discrimination against Catholics. When the company won the contract, it was conditional on the implementation of an equal opportunities programme (Booth & Bertsch, p56). As part of affirmative action, it announced that it would open a factory in West Belfast (McCormack & O'Hara, p35).

A campaign of disinvestment in Northern Ireland would have been problematic in view of the implications for job losses, when unemployment was very high (Mccormack & O'Hara, p35). Unlike South Africa, no local group was calling for such a boycott. The campaign therefore focused around the MacBride Principles, a set of anti-discrimination practices modelled on the Sullivan Principles which had been developed in relation to South Africa. They differed in that they were "designed to supplement inadequate and unenforced legislation forbidding discrimination" (McCormack & O'Hara, p37). They were not radical proposals, indeed "compared to the more vigorous US laws, are mild to the point of blandness" (ibid, p39). They called for positive action to improve the representation of the minority community, but not for targets, or quotas.

The MacBride Principles originated in the office of the Comptroller of New York, Harrison Goldin. They took the name of their chief sponsor, Sean MacBride.[5] In a long career, MacBride had been a UN Commissioner; won both the Nobel and Lenin Peace Prizes; helped found Amnesty International; been an Irish government minister; and Chief of Staff of the IRA. His international standing gave credibility to the principles, but his former connection with the IRA was, predictably, used by the British government and Unionists to discredit the campaign and its supporters.

The MacBride principles gained considerable support in the United States, including 13 states legislatures, the trade union movement (AFL/CIO), and many Church organisations of all denominations. The campaign put pressure on US companies which had previously shown little concern about sectarian practices. Few actually signed the principles, and shareholders were never able to win a vote against opposition from company management. But the campaign was able to muster sufficient support to negotiate with companies about their employment practices. Ford, for example, had been the subject of an FEA investigation and is the only US company to be found guilty of discrimination. In 1987, to preempt a shareholder resolution, Ford carried out a study of its workforce and adopted an affirmative action programme similar to the MacBride principles. Since this time it has produced an annual report on Fair Employment for its shareholders (see Chapter Seven).

The British government waged a campaign against the Principles which - in money and energy expended - was in marked contrast to its grudging activity against discrimination itself. The £400,000 budget for this campaign over a four year period was described as "chicken feed" by a representative of the British embassy, Mr Cowper-Bowles, at a conference on MacBride (Investor Responsibility Research Center, (IRRC), 1990, p21). It may have appeared as chicken feed to his US audience, but it was considerably more than the annual budget of the FEA even at its height. Patrick Doherty, who drafted the MacBride principles talked of a "no expense spared campaign" and of a Minnesota lobbyist who submitted a bill for $100,000 (Booth & Bertsch, p68).

The FEA itself was used in this campaign. The Agency's Chair spoke in the United States at meetings organised by the Northern Ireland Office in order to counter support from American politicians for the MacBride Principles.[6]

The government claimed that the MacBride campaign was detrimental to foreign investment, that the principles created 'hassle' for potential investors, and would deter

them from seeking to invest in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, campaigners argued, as SACHR had done that

> *"The achievement of full equality of opportunity is also important if Northern Ireland is to be perceived abroad as an attractive place for investment" (SACHR p43).*

An interesting insight into British government tactics is revealed in the transcript of the 1990 MacBride conference. Cowper-Bowles began his presentation with a claim that he agreed with '98%' of the points made by Patrick Doherty, throwing in for good measure a sneer at the backward 'tribal' customs of Protestants. He claimed that the "spirit and 90% of the letter of Macbride principles" was embodied in the 1989 legislation (IRRC, 1990, p13), but, questioned about the British government's opposition to the principles, went on to say that they

> *"resent the fact that people over here are playing politics .... that people over here are telling the democratically elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland what they should be doing" (ibid, p10).*

He ended the debate with the standard abuse used to rubbish government critics on Ireland, calling the MacBride campaigners "evil people with evil ends" (ibid p 27).

Much of the opposition to the campaign centred around the issue of whether the Principles called for reverse discrimination and were therefore illegal under existing legislation. Although the campaign produced an 'amplification' to clarify the ambiguity, American Brands (whose subsidiary, Gallaher, is a major Northern Ireland employer) refused to accept a shareholders motion, claiming that it was illegal. In 1986 the company lost a court battle on the issue. The company's arguments were the same as those of the British government, and the loss seriously weakened the government's case against MacBride. Peter Archer, QC, Labour's Northern Ireland spokesperson, appeared as a witness for the campaign.

In spite of official British hostility, the US campaign forced the government to prepare proposals to amend the legislation. These subsequently became the 1989 Fair Employment Act. Press reports of the new legislation, acknowledged the US role. The Independent for example argued that

"Concern among foreign investors about religious discrimination in Northern Ireland was acknowledged by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland ... as the prime motive behind government plans for more stringent fair employment laws" (cited in McCormack & O'Hara, p59).

The 1989 Fair Employment Act

The strength of the Act compared to other UK anti-discrimination measures represented a desire to maintain all-party consensus in Britain and Northern Ireland in response to the US challenge Osborne & Cormack (1989). Concern to maintain the traditional bi-partisan approach on Ireland led the government to accept some amendments to its original draft, but these were not in the end enough to secure opposition support. The Act is weaker than the FEA wanted in several respects, and was described by McCrudden as "fatally flawed" (Booth & Bertsch, p 49). It can be argued that the measures

"constituted the least that the Government felt was necessary to defuse criticism" (McCormack & O'Hara, p63).

The Act's main provisions are:

a) The establishment of the Fair Employment Commission (FEC) to replace the Fair Employment Agency (FEA)

The FEC has an expanded staff and budget, and greater powers. The budget for its first year was £1309,000, rising to #1,519,00 in 1991, when 51 people were in post (FEC, 1991). All FEA staff were transferred to the FEC, including the Chair. The FEC is responsible to the DED.

b) Monitoring

Annual monitoring of the religious composition of the workforce of private firms and public sector bodies is compulsory. In the first two years, this applied to firms with more than 25 employees; in 1992, it applied to firms employing more than 10. Failure to monitor is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine. Firms employing over 250 are required to submit information on job applications and appointments. All registered employers must review recruitment training and promotion practices at least every three years. In 1992 individual firms' monitoring returns were published for the first time.

c) Affirmative Action

The FEC has powers to investigate employment practices, linked both to the monitoring exercise, and to other reviews it may require. The FEC can require affirmative action measures, goals and timetables to remedy underrepresentation. The FEC is required to promote a new Code of Practice drawn up by the DED, and to advise employers on carrying out their reviews of employment practices.

d) Contract compliance

An employer can be disqualified from receiving public contracts for failure to register with the Commission; or submitting incomplete or false monitoring returns.

e) Fair Employment Tribunal

This new body takes over the FEA's role in relation to individual complaints of discrimination, with powers of adjudication, enforcement and appeal, and can order compensation up to £30,000.

f) Indirect Discrimination

The Act outlaws indirect discrimination.[7] *This can be the subject of individual complaints*

The government has not been able to defuse criticism of the Act either at the time of its passage or afterwards. Concern has focused on a similar range of issues to the previous legislation.

a) Lack of clear targets

The target of reducing the male unemployment differential called for in the SACHR report was not included. The Act makes no commitment to a timetable for change. It also excludes any use of quotas, which had also been rejected by SACHR. But for some on the receiving end of discrimination, this makes the act of limited value.[8] In Goldring's view

> *"the difference between affirmative action and reverse discrimination lies in the result. Quotas are targets that have been reached and reverse discrimination is affirmative action that works" (op cit, p58)*

b) Weakness of 'Affirmative Action'

The role and legality of affirmative action is very unclear. The overriding principle in the Act is the *merit principle* which is incorporated into the new Code of Practice for employers in spite of criticisms at the White Paper stage (McCrudden, 1990). By refusing to exempt *affirmative action* programmes from the duty not to discriminate, measures which have the effect of increasing the chances of Catholics were open to challenge in the courts for the first time.

This marks a step backward from the previous law, contrasting with the permissibility of affirmative action in British race and sex discrimination laws. Affirmative action becomes subordinate to "systematic and objective recruitment", which "gave the impression that the selection of candidates was an exact science" (McCrudden, 1988, p167). This process

> *"did not rest on an assessment of sectarianism. Technocracy by definition is rational and therefore non-sectarian." (Rolston, 1983, p199)*

But fairness and objectivity, even of the most scrupulous kind, are not sufficient in a situation of structural disadvantage. This system "shifts the onus of responsibility for unemployment or lack of career advancement to the Catholic/nationalist community".[9]

While 'objective recruitment' is promoted, it is nevertheless not made a legal requirement to follow the procedures outlined in the Code of Practice for employers. There is for example no obligation to advertise vacancies.[10]

The maintenance of a workplace free of manifestations of sectarianism is also not made a legal requirement (Booth & Bertsch, p52). Intimidation, and fear of intimidation, has been labelled the 'chill factor' in fair employment literature (DED, 1991, p9). In the PSI (1987) survey of Perceptions and Views, 23% of Catholics and 10% of Protestants reported that they had been victims of sectarian attack, but it was much more common among young men in Belfast. Actual attacks in the workplace are less common than fear of intimidation, but there are persistent reports of serious incidents (Rolston & Tomlinson, p65), which have succeeded in maintaining almost entirely segregated workforces in some areas.

c) Dependence on the Department of Economic Development

The FEC is not independent, but directly responsible to the DED, which appoints members of the Board and controls the budget. Given the history of the DED in ignoring the needs of the most disadvantaged groups in its employment strategy,[11] this is not encouraging (see Chapter Four).

The potential for conflict of interest between its developmental pro-business, and its monitoring roles are serious (Booth & Bertsch, p51). Graham points out that this conflict extends into the Commission itself:

> *"You wouldn't expect the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) to be wheeled out to reassure potential foreign investors about racism in Britain, but the Chair of the FEC has been used in that role in the United States."* [12]

The DED was charged with drawing up the draft code of practice and must approve any changes to it. In its draft code it referred to an *Advisory Section* which would be "distinct and separate" from other areas. The advice sought and given is confidential to that section and is not divulged to the rest of the Commission (McCormack & O'Hara, p69). Labour's spokesperson on Northern Ireland, Kevin McNamara, attacked this proposal, describing it as creating a "Chinese Wall" within the Commission. Since the DED has a right to all information held by the FEC. The potential for suppressing awkward investigations is enormous.

Another potentially worrying indication of the role of the DED is the research on fair employment is currently under way, funded by the Policy and Planning Research Unit of the NICS. This is being carried out by the NIERC,[13] a body whose director has publicly expressed hostility to the FEC's commitment to reducing the unemployment differential, and whose Director was used by Belfast City Council to defend it against charges of discrimination after an FEC inquiry.[14]

d) Security Exemption

The Act continues the exemption of the security forces (and teachers) from the Act, in spite of lobbying from the FEA and others. This crucial area remains a Protestant stronghold. Furthermore, the section of the 1976 Act which permitted exception if an action was deemed in the interests of national security has been maintained. A certificate issued by the Secretary of State prevents the FEC from carrying out investigations.

A recent case involved the newly privatised Northern Ireland Electricity Company, which withdrew a contract from a firm when it discovered that it was Catholic-owned. The Minister, Tom King, intervened to prevent an investigation because of "concern over the safety of a vital public utility" (Irish News, 1991, cited in Irish National Caucus (INC), 1992, p13). The decision was challenged in the courts by the FEC, but the case was lost on the grounds that the RUC and the DED had conducted inquires which supported the Minister's decision (ibid).

The law permits discrimination against "supporters of terrorism", an elastic term in Northern Ireland, which can be used to include - as one MP suggested in the discussion on the bill - anyone who votes for Sinn Fein (IRRC, 1990, p5). This could be used to discriminate against people living in strongly-Republican areas.[15]

These provisions maintain the notion of Catholic 'disloyalty', which is at the heart of the constitutional issue.

The act fails to address the roots of sectarianism. The FEA/FEC has been keen to stress that segregation affects workplaces across the board, and that there are many where Protestants are underrepresented. Laudable as the aim of integrated workplaces is, this position tends to imply that sectarianism is a problem of which both sides are equally guilty. Rolston (1983) points out that one of the first statements made by Peter Newsam as chair of the British Commission for Racial Equality was racism was a problem of the white community. A similar statement from the FEC is unthinkable. The Act promotes an abstract notion of fairness which by

> *"asking individuals to accept the pursuit of equality as limited to the sale of their labour power on grounds of formal equal access at the point of entry to the labour market not only ignores the question of an already existing unequal sectarian marketplace, ...but unnecessarily defines the limitations of policy change to the framework of the marketplace" (Graham, 1983, p74).*

But this evenhandedness is excluded from the security services and 'sensitive' areas, which can be defined as such by Ministers and civil servants with no right of public scrutiny. While some changes in work practices may be expected, the key institutions of Protestant rule remain intact.

Sex Discrimination

Sex discrimination is not so high on the official political agenda, and this is reflected in the budget and powers of the two equality bodies. There has been no pressure from abroad similar to the MacBride campaign to increase powers against sex discrimination, although the EC has initiated some of the changes which the British government has reluctantly incorporated into legislation in Britain and Northern Ireland.

Women in Northern Ireland have not been able to wage campaigns capable of forcing the government to take action on these issues. The national question has not only eclipsed women's campaigns, but has also served to undermine women's ability to organise in their own interests (Evason, 1991).

The legislation on sex discrimination was not designed for Northern Ireland itself, but was imported from Britain. The legislative framework in which the EOCNI operates is broadly similar to that in Britain, with minor differences in administrative structures for example in pursuing individual complaints (Lester, 1990, p12). But the environment in which the two bodies operate is different, and the position of women in many areas quite dissimilar.

The EOCNI probably plays a relatively more important role in relation to promoting women's issues than does its sister organisation in Britain. Its chair, Mary Clark Glass has given the organisation a high profile through public statements on issues concerning women.[16] She has described the organisation as 'proactive', citing for example the fact that EOCNI produced the first publication in the UK on sexual harassment issued by a statutory body (Clark-Glass, 1990).

Direct Rule has deprived women in Northern Ireland of access to 'legitimate' political power (see Chapter Four). In this situation the EOCNI provides one of the few arenas for the promotion of women's concerns. But although sectarianism is so much part of women's lives, and has major implications for women's rights, religion is rarely addressed directly in EOCNI publications or publicity material.

The Legislation

The legislative framework is contained in three main provisions: the Equal Pay Act of 1970; the Sex Discrimination Order of 1976; and the Equal Value amendment of 1984 which became law in the United Kingdom following a ruling by the European Commission. Each added new powers, but retained the common framework which

> *"focuses only upon unequal contractual terms and conditions of employment. It left untouched equal opportunities outside the contract of employment" (Lester, p13).*

The Equal Pay Act made it illegal to discriminate in pay between people doing "the same or broadly similar work" or work defined as equivalent by a job evaluation scheme. While it led to an immediate increase in women's hourly earnings relative to men in Britain (from 63.1% in 1970 to 75.5% in 1977) the increase was not sustained, and by 1985, the increase was partially reversed with the ratio falling back to 74%. The Act had "outlived its usefulness" by the 1980s (Gregory, p23).

The Sex Discrimination act included the concept of *indirect discrimination* imported from the United States. This

> *"represented a major departure in legal ideology. It broke with the traditional method of reducing social conflicts to questions of individual guilt and innocence and sought instead to identify and remove the historical and structural impediments to equality" (Gregory, p35).*

Indirect discrimination potentially offered a much broader framework of remedies, not open in relation to Fair Employment at the time. It provided the possibility of a challenge to rules on for example part-time working, which -though formally applying to both sexes equally - in practice have a disproportionate impact on women. But the new act was "'wrapped' around" the Equal Pay Act (Lester, p13) and retained the same individual framework. Divorced from the American context, where 'class actions' are permissible, its impact was seriously weakened (Gregory, p35).

The Equal Value legislation amended the 1970 Equal Pay Act. The 1970 Act had done nothing to remedy low pay for women in segregated employment, who could not claim comparison with men. One result had been to increase segregation as employers used the five and a half year transition period before implementation to reshuffle workers in order to avoid having to pay women workers more (Gregory p22). The concept of Equal Value is intended to remedy the situation

"where jobs are identified as being appropriate for women, the very designation carries with it an inference that the jobs are of lesser value than the jobs performed by men despite the skill, effort and responsibility attached (Rubinstein, p22).

Women are given the job title 'cook' while men are 'chefs'; women are 'shop assistants', men 'salesmen' (ibid).

Unfortunately the legislation remains, in the words of the EOCNI

"complex, cumbersome and unworkable and results in unacceptable delays which lead to inordinate legal costs" (EOCNI, 1991, p12).

Of 4,000 equal value applications in the UK in the five years after the law took effect, 20 cases were concluded, including one in Northern Ireland (Maxwell, 1991, p75). The continued focus on the individual complainant places a considerable burden on that person, requiring persistence and a willingness to undergo what can often be a painful public scrutiny of every aspect of their working lives. As the Alison Halford case demonstrated, the burden of proof continues to rest with the complainant, although the relevant evidence may be accessible only to the employer. The European Commission proposed a directive placing the burden of proof on the employer, which was vetoed by the British government.

The law requires that the complainant find a male 'comparator' employed either in the same establishment or another of the same or associated employer, provided common terms and conditions of employment apply. An employer can argue that the claim is invalid if an objective evaluation has been carried out. This must be 'analytic', involving an examination of various dimensions of the job such as skill, effort and responsibility. But as Rubinstein has pointed out

"An 'acceptable' job evaluation is commonly regarded as one which broadly replicates the existing wage hierarchy of jobs. This is not surprising, since were it not the case there would be something radically wrong with the previous structure" (p23).

This hierarchy will tend to reflect the prevailing social norm, that women's work is of less value than men's. Rubinstein points out that while the British EOC expressed concern at the tendency to undervalue women's work in these schemes, an example of this same bias was contained in their own pamphlet, *Job Evaluation Schemes Free*

of Sex Bias. In comparing the work of a maintenance fitter and a nurse, he argued they had undervalued the nurse's job (p24).

Many of the recent legislative developments have followed European Commission rulings. There have been two Programmes of Action on equal opportunities for women (the second from 1986-1990) and a series of EEC directives: on equal pay (1975); employment (1976) state social security scheme (1979); occupational social security schemes (1986) and the self-employed (1986). The Equal Value legislation itself followed a European Commission Directive (LRD, 1990).

The UK is the only EC country which has not signed the Social Charter.[17] This is not a particularly radical document, and many proposals are existing practice in some member states. But its implementation would have significant benefits for women in the UK, which in many areas is at or near the bottom of the league in terms of women's rights. The Social Charter states that "equal treatment for men and women shall be assured" and recommends action be intensified to ensure equality in "remuneration, access to employment, social protection, education, and vocational training and career development". The second draft was amended to include the words:

> *"such action shall imply the development of amenities enabling those concerned to reconcile their occupational and family obligations more easily"*

As implied in the support for 'amenities' to reconcile family and work obligations, equal treatment requires not just removal of *formal discrimination,* but provision of specific facilities and conditions. But, like much of the *Social Europe* programme, implementation of equal opportunities proposals has been very slow compared with progress towards the Single Market, an emphasis which is not merely due to Britain's opposition (Grahl & Teague, 1989).

The majority of legislation is concerned with paid work, but the problem for many women is lack of access to the formal labour market. Much of women's work is unpaid, as women continue to bear the major burden of domestic labour and caring responsibilities (McWilliams, 1991). Caring responsibilities also dictate that nearly half of women in the labour force are part-time workers. Those working less than eight hours a week are unprotected, while those working under 16 hours are entitled to limited protection. This means that

"part-time workers, the vast majority of whom are women, make up a vulnerable, unprotected and grossly underpaid section of the workforce ... equality legislation in Europe must be viewed from a highly critical perspective, in particular in its relevance to this marginalised section of the female workforce" (Barry & Jackson, 1988, p 91).

It was the 1976 legislation which established the statutory Equal Opportunities Commission, with a separate body in Northern Ireland, the EOCNI. The Commission has powers to:

a) pursue individual complaints of discrimination

The most widely publicised aspect of the EOC's work has been the legal advice and support given to individual complainants as cases have progressed through the courts. This support is cash-limited, and the Halford Case used up half its annual legal budget of £600,000, which meant that pressure to settle the case on unfavourable terms became overwhelming.[18]

b) carry out formal investigations

The legislation gives powers to make formal investigations where discriminatory practices are suspected. This has generally followed complaints. If unlawful discrimination is found, the Commission can issue a non-discrimination notice, and seek injunctions to restrain employers from acts of persistent discrimination. But in the first decade of the EOC's existence, only eight investigations were attempted, which resulted in six reports, and only one non-discrimination notice. The EOC commissioners in Britain have been reluctant to engage in confrontation with employers, preferring to ensure cooperation (Gregory, p126), an approach similar to that defended by the FEA.

The EOC has no powers comparable to those of the new FEC to monitor employment patterns. Furthermore, their investigations have frequently been hobbled by the courts, which has ensured that the Commission takes a cautious line.

c) promote education and research and give advice

Under this heading the Commission has powers to organise promotional and publicity campaigns. It can also fund organisations which aim to promote equality of opportunity and to commission research into the nature and extent of sex discrimination.

The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland (EOCNI)

In contrast to the British EOC, the EOCNI has

> *"traditionally given a high priority to supporting individual cases, and has adopted a distinctly litigious stance where a case raises any new point of legal principle, compared with its counterpart in Great Britain, which in the past has preferred to operate at the level of exhortation" (Maxwell, 1991, p85).*

The Women's officer of NUPE is currently a Deputy Chair of the EOCNI, and the union has supported its members at the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) in the longest running equal value case in Northern Ireland. The policy, which as

> *"part of a general strategy against low wages, is clearly exceptional" (ibid, p81).*

The case concerns the claim of five domestic assistants at the hospital that their work is of equal value to that of male porters and groundsmen who are on higher grades. The claim was lodged in 1985. The women won a partial victory when a court ruled in 1989 that the employer, the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, could not import the results of a British job evaluation into Northern Ireland. The court required a report from an independent expert, but this report has still not been produced. The case continues into its seventh year. I interviewed the main complainant, and others involved in this case, which will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

The EOCNI's Annual Report 1990-1 lists 22 equal value cases which it has pursued since the legislation. Of these 4 have been won, and one lost; in one case involving 8 claimants, 3 had their claim upheld, 2 were settled and 3 withdrew; 6 others have been settled, and 10 are continuing. While the actual case history in equal value cases has been disappointing, Maxwell argues that it provides the scope for "radical reappraisals of the work traditionally done by women" (p91) and that the indirect impact of publicity surrounding the cases, has raised awareness and recognition that "women's jobs" may be undervalued. This view is supported by those people (both women and men) I spoke to at the RVH.

The report reveals a range of activities and concerns. The contrast is quite marked with that of the FEC, whose activities are largely concerned with pursuing the legislation through promoting monitoring, and advice work for firms, as well as pursuing complaints. The legislation is concerned, as is the fair employment legislation, with the

labour market contract, but recognition of structural disadvantage in relation to sex appears to be more explicit. The EOCNI's programme for 1990-5 sets out seven priorities: Equal Pay - prioritising low paid workers: Contractual Terms: Working Parents (including workers with other caring responsibilities); Non-traditional working areas; vertical segregation; sexual harassment; the National Curriculum (EOC, 1991, p1). Research has been commissioned on some of these, as well as publicity and information campaigns.

Another major concern has been the impact of government legislation on women. The adverse effect of compulsory competitive tendering, for example is an issue on which the EOC has made representations (ibid, p26), while the Commission has also raised concerns in relation to European Community Directives on Part Time working.[19]

The report notes an increase in the number of employers asking for advice on equality issues. Many requests follow settlement of complaints of discrimination. They include the Ulster Bank, a subsidiary of National Westminster (see Chapter Seven).

The EOCNI has had to play a more proactive role in promoting equality issues, in the absence of other bodies such as women's committees which have been important in Britain. It runs a seminar programme for personnel officers on equality in the work place, such as flexible work practices. The numbers attending are quite impressive, but they are confined almost entirely to the public sector.[20] The numbers involved in flexible working arrangements are small by British standards, but the increase in women's labour force participation, particularly in professional public sector occupations, has meant that these practices are developing.

In a cautious conclusion to the last of the 'Womanpower' series, Trewsdale (1987) argues that the equality legislation "although not ideal, has contributed to improving women's position in employment since the mid-1970s" (p47). But the main problems, she argues, remain sex segregation in the labour market, and the large number of low-paid workers who remain outside the official statistics.

Conclusion

The EOCNI and the FEC share the task of attempting to overcome disadvantage through a legislative framework based on the notion of formal equality, which is confined largely to the labour market contract. At this level the two are mutually supportive: an equal opportunities policy which develops objective criteria for recruitment should help both women and Catholics by breaking down the old (Protestant) boy networks which excluded women and Catholics. This was a view put to me by those concerned with fair employment issues.[21]

But recognition of common areas in promoting equality practices has not led to a combined approach. At the most practical level, the separation of issues is perpetuated in the research and statistics which each collect. Little of the EOCNI material contains information on religion, while the FEC does not publish the detailed results of its religious monitoring broken down by gender. This proved problematic in collecting material for the following chapters.

The different political pressures and priorities of the two organisations have not been conducive to a greater level of cooperation. There is resentment by the EOCNI at its relative powerlessness. The view was expressed to me that men had forced the issue of sectarianism onto the agenda through violence, whereas women's issues were neglected. [22]

The EOCNI has largely avoided the issue of religion divisions. A recent survey of 1,000 women which it commissioned has been used as the basis of a book on women's working lives. But although the questionnaire contained a question on religion, none of the authors chose to take up the issue of religious divisions.[23] There has been some recognition recently of the need to examine the specific problems of Catholic women by some researchers (see for example McWilliams et al) but very little work has been published.

To move out of their separate spheres would raise the question of the deep-seated structural nature of these divisions and call into question the limited framework of legal equality within which both work.

Equal opportunities legislation represents a 'one-nation' project, requiring a degree of social consensus on the goal of equality, and a general acceptance of the legitimacy of state intervention. In Northern Ireland the state was built on a 'two nations' project in which the exclusion of Catholics was not incidental, but central to its existence. The effectiveness of equality legislation in these circumstances is likely to be severely limited.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Organised by CAJ - Northern Ireland Council Civil Liberties - see CAJ Bulletin, Vol 6 No 11, December 1991, p1

2. Interview with Donald Graham, former staff member of FEA, September 1992

3. The SACHR Report lists 12 reforming measures between 1969 and 1977, the majority enacted before Direct Rule (SACHR, 1987, pp 9-11).

4. After the longest sex discrimination case in Britain against the police service ended in a settlement which involved her dropping her charges of discrimination, Alison Halford said,

> *"Although I have not achieved my goal of becoming chief consumable, ... I believe that no woman will ever again suffer as much as I have through rank discrimination in the police force. The way has been eased to allow other women of courage and commitment to follow me up the greasy pole of promotion" (Guardian, July 23rd 1992).*

5. The other main sponsors of the MacBride Principles were Inez McCormack (Regional Officer of NUPE); John Robb (a surgeon from a Protestant background who sat in the Irish Republic's Senate); and Father Brian Brady (a Catholic priest active on human rights issues) (see McCormack & O'Hara, 1990).

6. Interview with Donald Graham

7. Indirect discrimination exists where rules apply equally to both groups (in this case both religious communities) in a purely formal sense, but where Catholics are treated less favourably in the practical impact of the rules (see Lester, 1990, p13).

8. *Is West Belfast Working ?* Conference, 1990, Conference Report p 59.

9. Obair Briefing Paper no. 3, *The 1989 Fair Employment Act*, 1990, p2

10. It is widely believed that all vacancies have to be advertised, a misapprehension which some equal opportunities officers are happy to allow to continue (interview with Short Brothers Equal Opportunities manager)

11. In 1991, only 8.5% of the most senior (level A) officers in the Department were Catholic, and 2.% were women. In each case this was the sixth highest percentage of seven departments. For level B officers, there were 22.3% Catholics, and 10.7% women,putting it in third and sixth place respectively (DFP, 1991).

12. Interview with Donald Graham, former staff member, FEA.

13. Information supplied by NIERC.

14. Irish News, April, 1992

15. A participant at the *Is West Belfast Working ?* reported that he received no response to job applications when using his West Belfast address, but received replies when writing from outside (Conference Report, p59).

16. Interview with information officer of EOCNI

17. European Commission (1989) *Community Charter of basic social rights for workers*, COM (89) 568

18. Observer, 18th July 1992.

19. EOCNI Response to consultative Document on EC draft directives on part-time and temporary work and working time (unpublished).

20. Of over 100 people attending a seminar on job sharing in March 1992, 13 were from private companies, of which most were from the major banks. Only 3 manufacturing companies were represented, and the recently privatised Northern Ireland electricity company.

21. Interviews with Bob Cooper (FEC); Rory Galway (Short Brothers)

22. This view was put to me informally by the EOCNI information officer.

23. Some of the material from this survey has been used in Chapter Six.

Labour Market Inequality, 1971 - 1991

The economic and social developments discussed in Chapter Four have brought substantial changes in the structure of the labour market. Increased public expenditure in the 1970s, and the shift in employment towards public and private services, expanded employment opportunities for women and for Catholics, quite apart from the impact of equality legislation.

This chapter will examine patterns of religious and gender disadvantage in the labour market in the twenty year period of Direct Rule, in order to assess the extent of continuity and change. This will be based primarily on global figures, and is intended as background to the more detailed discussion of private sector firms in Chapter Seven and the public sector in Chapter Eight. The first part is concerned with access to the labour market; the second with the type and status of work done by those in employment; the third with income and living standards.

The Census of Population is the most comprehensive data source. It includes figures for economic activity, occupations and other labour market information broken down by gender and religion. The 1981 Census provided the first opportunity to assess the general impact of the 1976 Fair Employment Act. Only the Summary Report of the 1991 Census is so far available, and the information contained is much more limited.

Assessing the religious composition of the population from the census is a complex problem. Response to the religious question is voluntary: there was a 7.3% refusal rate in 1991, compared to 18.5% in 1981 and 9.4% in 1971. The census does not use the category *Protestant*: responses are broken down into *Roman Catholic*; the three main Protestant denominations (*Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist*); *Other Denominations*; and *Not Stated*. The overwhelming majority of the last group consists of smaller Protestant denominations, but it also includes non-Christian religions. The latter have been growing in recent years, but their total numbers still represent only 0.17% of the population. The 1991 Census included a new category *None*, in which 3.8% of the population placed themselves.

The percentage of those who stated their religion as Catholic underestimates the proportion of people 'from the Catholic community' since some will place themselves in the *Not Stated* and *None* categories. In the analysis below, the percentage of Catholics and Protestants will normally be calculated as a percentage of people who stated a religion (ie excluding *Not stated* and *None*). This is still likely to underestimate the Catholic proportion, since it makes the implicit assumption that the religion of non-responders is distributed in proportion to their numbers in the population. This is unlikely to be the case; it seems plausible that there is a greater degree of hostility to the state from Catholics, who are more therefore more likely to refuse to answer this question.[1] There was an estimated 2% non-enumeration in the 1981 Census which was also thought to be primarily in Catholic areas (Osborne & Cormack, 1987 p1). No figure is available for 1991. 'Other Denominations' will be counted as Protestant. The latter overestimates Protestant numbers, but the difference is very small, and will tend to balance the underestimate of Catholics.

The proportion of Catholics has risen during the period. Those stating their religion as Catholic increased from less than a third in 1971 to nearly 40% in 1991. The high refusal rate in 1981 is reflected in a fall in the Catholic proportion, both of the total enumerated, and of the total excluding 'non stated'.

Table 6.1 - Religious composition of the population, 1971-91 (%)

	Catholic	Protestant
1971	31.4 [35.74]	59.2 [64.26]
1981	28.0 [34.33]	53.5 [65.67]
1991	38.4 [43.14]	50.6 [56.86]

Note: figures in brackets refer to proportion of Catholics and Protestants when other categories are excluded. Protestant includes 'Other Denominations'.

Source: Census of Population for 1981 (Religion Report); 1991 (Summary report)

Other sources have been used to analyse changes since 1981. These include the Continuous Household Survey, which began in 1983. It samples approximately 1% of households annually, and includes a religion question. The latest available report was for 1989. The Labour Force Survey, conducted annually in all EC member states, also samples 1% of domestic properties. In Northern Ireland it includes a religion question.

Most analyses of religious discrimination are based on the above sources, although the PSI also carried out its own survey of attitudes in the workplace in its work for SACHR. The same data sources have been used for research into changes in women's employment. The EOCNI's 'Womanpower' series relies largely on the Labour Force Survey, while Trewsdale's study of religion and gender was based on census data. The EOCNI commissioned a survey in 1990 (Kremer et al, 1990) in which 1,000 women were interviewed about their working lives. Some unpublished data from this survey is used below.

Access to the Labour Market

Unemployment

The Religious Differential

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the data on the unemployment differential is that very little has changed since 1971. While unemployment in general has risen with economic decline, it has not produced "equality of misery" (Osborne & Cormack, 1987, p71) between Protestant and Catholic. As Rowthorn & Wayne (1988) put it, Protestant unemployment rose only to

> *"the level considered normal for Catholics at the height of the economic prosperity in the early 1970s" (p110).*

This suggests that, as well as 'equality of misery' being a myth, the reverse side of the coin, equality of prosperity, is equally unlikely. The differential has remained remarkably constant since 1971 in percentage terms, in spite of changes in the overall level of employment.

Table 6.2 - Religion and Unemployment 1971-1991 (%)

	1971			1981			1991		
	c	p	diff (c/p)	c	p	diff (c/p)	c	p	diff (c/p)
male	17.3	6.6	**2.62**	30.2	12.4	**2.46**	28.4	12.7	**2.24**
female	7.0	3.6	**1.94**	17.1	9.6	**1.78**	14.5	8.0	**1.81**

Source: Figures for 1971 & 1981 from Osborne and Cormack, 1987, p 72; figures for 1991 calculated from 1991 Census (Summary Report).

The proportionate differential between Protestant and Catholic decreased slightly in the 1970s as the general level of unemployment grew, although in absolute terms it increased by over 7 points for males, and 4 for females. The proportionate and absolute gap for males is lower in 1991, while it has risen slightly for females. The 1991 Census included a new category *on a government employment of training scheme*. A higher proportion of Catholics than of Protestants were on these schemes. Adding this proportion to the unemployment rate raises the proportion of Catholic males out of work to 31.46% and the Protestant male rate to 14.22% (both higher than the 1981 unemployment rate). The female figures are 16.71% for Catholics and 9.35% for Protestants (slightly below the 1981 rates). The Labour Force Survey for 1991 gives different estimates of unemployment, producing a differential of 2.56 for males, and 1.83 for females.

The officially recognised differential for women is considerably lower than for men, and it is the male rate which has become the key target for policy. But Catholic female unemployment has remained nearly double that of Protestant females, and has been consistently higher than that of Protestant males. Catholic women clearly suffer disadvantage in access to the labour market on account of their religion.

Women's unemployment tends to be underestimated in official figures. In Kremer's 1990 survey for the EOCNI, of 566 women not in paid work, 82 were registered as unemployed. But of these only 48 described themselves as unemployed; the rest stated that they were sick, or looking after dependents. On the other hand, 38 of those not registered described themselves as unemployed. This demonstrates the elastic nature of women's labour market activity, and the difficulty in categorising unemployment.

Catholic unemployment in 1981 was higher in every District Council area except Castlereagh. This was true for both men and women, except that Protestant female unemployment was higher than Catholic in Carrickfergus. The male differential varied from 1.20 in Carrickfergus to 3.01 in Cookstown. For females, the differential was highest in Antrim (2.12) and lowest in Moyle (1.07). Protestant female unemployment was nearly three times higher in Castlereagh, a marked exception to the general trend (1981 Census).

In Belfast, unemployment is concentrated in Catholic-dominated wards. Wards where unemployment was over 25% contained 57% of the city's Catholic population, and 16% of the Protestant population in 1981 (Rowthorn & Wayne, p117). Local studies suggest that the real unemployment rate in West Belfast is much higher than indicated by official figures. Estimates were as high as 86% for all adults in mainly-Catholic Ballymurphy (1983), and 61% in the Lower Falls (1986/7); a much lower figure of 20% was estimated for the mainly Protestant Shankill (1987), although this is still above the official rate. (Rolston & Tomlinson, p71). These figures should be treated with caution, but they point to a sizeable gap between the official figures and the reality. Comparable figures are not yet available from the 1991 Census.

The PSI study undertook a statistical analysis of the reasons for the unemployment differential, estimating the contribution of various factors which have been used to account for it. They found "no evidence" to support the view that Protestants are more committed than Catholics to work. The 'chill factor' was thought to be significant, while Protestant domination of the security forces, which employ approximately 5% of the working population, accounted for a considerable part of the difference.

Table 6.3 - Factors Responsible for Unemployment Differential (%)

Regional factors	1.0
Educational qualifications	1.4
Age profile differences	1.7
Family size	2.1
Class differences	4.1
Dual labour market	2.0
Total	12.3
Observed unemployment differential	20.2
Difference attributable to religion	7.9

Source: SACHR, 1987, pp24-35

Some of these factors, in particular the different class profiles and the dual labour markets in the two communities, are part of the problem requiring explanation, rather than part of the explanation. Even if they are included as explanations, there remains a substantial difference. The report concludes that

> *"in the absence of other plausible explanations, it is reasonable to suppose that religion is the most likely explanatory factor" (ibid, p35).*

Religion was regarded as a residual. The researchers did not attempt to test this directly by carrying out experimental job applications, as has been done in Britain to gather evidence of racial discrimination. In a statement indicating continuing sensitivity on the issue, the authors assert without explanation that this was deemed

> *"not to be a suitable form of research to conduct at this time in Northern Ireland" (p34).*

Age Profile

The age profile of the unemployed differs between the two communities. Whereas for Protestant males, unemployment is almost twice the Protestant average in the youngest age group, Catholic unemployment remains virtually the same in all age groups. The religious differential is therefore greater for older men. The same pattern applies to women, with Catholic women's unemployment twice that of Protestants for those over the age of 25.

Table 6.4 - Unemployment rates by age group 1991

	Male			Female		
	C	P	diff	C	P	diff
16-24	26	15	1.73	12	8	1.5
25-39	23	8	2.88	12	4	2.0
40-64	21	8	2.63	10	5	2.0

Source: Labour Force Survey for 1991

A more complex pattern emerges from the CHS data, which breaks down the youngest age group into 16-18 and 19-24 (these figures do not distinguish by sex). They show that while unemployment is actually lower among Catholics than Protestants in the younger age group, there are 9% more Protestants working, while Catholic unemployment is kept low by a higher staying on rate at school. By 19, when most people from both communities have left formal education, different access to the labour market is reflected in higher Catholic unemployment.

Table 6.5 - Employment Status of 18-24 year olds, 1985-7 (%)

	16-18		19-24	
	C	P	C	P
Working	19	28	45	63
Unemployed	11	12	27	15
in education	56	47	8	8
training scheme	11	10	1	0
keeping house	1	2	17	12
permanently unable to work	0	0	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Continuous Household Survey, 1989

The most striking figure is the difference of 18% between the two communities in the number who have found a job in the older age group. As Murray & Darby point out,

> *"The majority of Protestant boys learn of available jobs through parents and relatives, and if Protestants presently hold a disproportionate share of the job market, then there seems little chance in the near future of rectifying the imbalance in employment which seems to exist between the two main religious groups" (cited in Cormack & Osborne, 1983, p225).*

This is borne out in the PSI survey, which found a high proportion of informal recruitment procedures: 49% of skilled manual vacancies were filled in this way, and 45% unskilled of semi-skilled. Murray and Darby refer specifically to boys, and it is the typically 'male' jobs in which this form of recruitment practice has been most widely discussed, especially through the male-dominated Orange Lodges. But the female differential suggests that similar exclusionary practices apply for women. Trewsdale (1983) for example mentions the exclusion of Catholic girls from finance through recruitment concentrated on Protestant schools. It seems unlikely that these practices can be eliminated, particularly in smaller companies, while the FEC's Code of Practice remains voluntary rather than a legal requirement on companies.

There has been limited time to see any impact from the new legislation. The FEC reports a small rise in the proportion of Catholics in the companies they monitor (0.4% for men and 0.5% for women) between the two years 1990 and 1991 when monitoring has taken place (FEC, 1992, p5). But they also report an increase in the Catholic labour force. Osborne & Cormack (1987) argue that

> *"the expectation for marginal rather than wholesale occupational change is suggested by experience in the United States" (p2).*

and that change should be looked for among newer entrants, who have entered a labour market where commitment to equal opportunities in public policy exists (ibid, pp2-3). But the figures in the last table suggests that young Catholics are still finding it considerably harder to gain employment.

Education and Unemployment

Unemployment is related closely to levels of educational attainment, with unemployment highest among those without academic qualifications. But there is no obvious relationship between the religious differential and educational achievement.

According to the 1991 census, the lowest male differential is at level 1 (those with higher education qualifications). This is the only group in which Catholic unemployment is less than twice the Protestant rate. But the next lowest differential is at the other end of the educational scale, level 7 (no qualifications) and the highest for those with level 5 (O level and equivalents). For females, the lowest differential is again for those with

level 1 qualifications, but the highest is among those with level 4 (BTEC National and equivalents) where the Catholic rate is more than double the Protestant rate.

Table 6.6a - Male Unemployment rates by religion and education level, 1991 (%)

	Level1	Level2	Level3	Level4	Level5	Level6	Level7
Catholic	4.8	7.5	15.1	11.1	17.7	25.8	36.3
Prot	2.8	3.1	6.4	4.5	7.0	11.2	17.3
Diff	**1.71**	**2.42**	**2.36**	**2.47**	**2.53**	**2.30**	**2.10**

Table 6.6b - Female Unemployment rates by religion and education level, 1991 (%)

	Level1	Level2	Level3	Level4	Level5	Level6	Level7
Catholic	4.5	6.4	8.	9.2	9.4	16.3	20.9
Prot	3.6	4.3	4.3	4.2	5.5	10.2	10.7
Diff	**1.25**	**1.49**	**2.05**	**2.19**	**1.71**	**1.60**	**1.95**

Source: 1991 Census, Summary Report

These figures tend to confirm the findings of the PSI report, that difference in education levels could explain very little of the religious difference in unemployment. For Catholics, possession of a higher education qualification reduces considerably the chance of unemployment both absolutely and relative to Protestants. But this does not appear to apply to other qualifications, where Catholic disadvantage remains.

Long-Term Unemployment

Catholics, as well as experiencing higher unemployment, are more likely to stay unemployed for longer periods. In 1991, more than half of Protestant unemployed had been out of work for less than a year, compared to 39% of Catholics.

Table 6.7 - Long Term Unemployment 1983-1991 (% of unemployed out of work for more than 2 years)

1983		1991	
Catholic	Protestant	Catholic	Protestant
44	33	48	34

Source: 1983 figures, CHS data; 1991 figures, LFS Religion Report

Long-term unemployment remains a disproportionately Catholic phenomenon. In his study of two Belfast housing estates, Howe (1990) found differing attitudes to unemployment in the two communities. In Protestant East Belfast, 50% of the unemployed men he interviewed had worked in manufacturing, and expected to get work in that area again. They were not attuned to the possibility of mixing earnings and benefits, expecting legitimate employment. In Catholic West Belfast, only 34 of the 441 male 'heads of household' in the estate studied had jobs in manufacturing. Unemployed men did not expect to find formal employment; *doing the double*[2] was more common, and viewed with "less opprobrium". But Howe stressed that although this was seen as a 'way of life' it does not substitute for formal employment, or provide a viable economic option.

Economic Activity

In common with all European countries, female labour force participation in Northern Ireland has increased, while male has declined over the past twenty years. But Catholic activity (both male and female) remains significantly lower than Protestant. In 1991, the participation rate of Protestant males aged 16-64 was 87%, compared with 79% for Catholic males. The corresponding figures for women were 65% and 56% (LFS, 1991).

The low Catholic activity rate compounds the higher unemployment to reduce the proportion of Catholics in work. On 1991 LFS figures, Catholic men are less likely to be in work than Protestant women, in spite of a substantially higher activity rate.

Table 6.8 - Proportion of population of working age in work, 1991 (%)

	Catholic		Protestant	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Activity rate	79	56	87	65
Unemployment	23	11	9	6
% in work	**60.8**	**49.8**	**79.2**	**49.8**

Source: LFS Religion Report, 1991.

Economic Activity by Age Group

Activity rates show distinctive paths for the two communities. For both men and women the lower participation of Catholics in the younger age group is partially explained by the greater number who gave study as the reason for not being in the labour force. But the widest disparity for women (17%) is at 35-44, when many women are still looking after children.

Table 6.9 - Economic Activity by Age Group (%), 1991

	Males			Females		
	C	P	Diff	C	P	Diff
16-24	68	77	**9**	52	60	**8**
25-34	91	96	**5**	64	72	**8**
35-44	90	96	**6**	55	72	**17**
45-59/64	70	83	**13**	51	58	**7**

Source: ibid

The differential for men is highest in the oldest age group, with only 70% of Catholic men over the age of 45 in the labour force. This suggests the effect of discouragement through long term unemployment. Taking the unemployment rate of 21% for all men over 40, this figure means that not many more than half (55.3%) of Catholic men over this age are in work.

Economic Activity and Partner's Employment Status

Campbell et al (1990), using figures from the 1985 Labour Force Survey, show that single Catholic women have a slightly higher participation rate than Protestants, while for married Catholics the rate is over 10% lower than for Protestants. Taking only married women with children under six years old, the Catholic rate is 30.6% compared to 41.9% for Protestants, with the discrepancy greatest for the youngest age group (23.9% for Catholics; 41.8% for Protestants).

Part of this differences lies in the larger average family size of Catholics. The Continuous Household Survey (1989) gave details of the number of children born to married and cohabiting women of child-bearing age (16-44). In 1986-7 the average number of children already born to Catholics was 2.8, and to Protestants 2.0. Catholics expected to have an average of 3.4 children when their families were complete, compared with a Protestant average of 2.5. Clearly the number of children a woman has affects her ability to combine work and child-care, particularly in the absence of adequate state support.

McWilliams (1991) argues that women's economic activity is affected by their partner's economic status. The benefit system creates a disincentive for married women to work, since husband's benefit is lost when a wife's earnings exceed a very low threshold. This is particularly important for part-time work, where potential earnings are insufficient to compensate for loss of benefit. She shows that a woman is more likely to be in paid employment if her husband is working, and suggests that

> *"the percentage of unemployed couples is higher amongst Catholics whilst dual earners are more likely among Protestants, particularly where the second earner works part-time" (p28).*

She does not produce any direct evidence for this, but it seems plausible given the unemployment differential. The EOCNI 1990 survey gives support to this view. For both Catholics and Protestants, economic activity was more than twice as high if the partner was in work, and the partners of Protestant women were more likely than those of Catholics to be working: 82% compared to 66%.

Table 6.10 - Employment Status of women in relation to partner (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	full-time	part time	no paid work	full-time	part time	no paid work
Partner in paid work	30.8	26.6	42.6	30.8	35.2	34.0
Partner not in paid work	12.6	13.8	73.6	14.3	10.0	75.7

Source: Kremer et al (1990), unpublished data

The effect of higher unemployment among Catholic men was lower economic activity for Catholic women: the activity rate for Protestant women was 34.2% (full time) and 23.0% (part time), compared to Catholic rates of 29.5% and 17.8%. This produced a higher proportion of unemployed couples among Catholics: of women living with partners, 25% of Catholics were in unemployed couples, compared to 13.8% of Protestants.

McLaughlin (1986), in a survey carried out in Derry, found that the 'female breadwinner' image is a myth "and that most unemployed couples were concentrated in the Catholic ghetto of the Creggan" (p 43). Far from women replacing their husbands in employment, they are more likely to be unemployed or inactive themselves.

While partners' economic status and family size seem to be significant factors in explaining Catholic women's lower activity rate, the evidence produced so far cannot explain all the difference between the two rates. The construction of the labour market itself must be important.

Part-time Work

The proportion of jobs which are part-time is lower than in Britain, 37% compared to 42% in 1987 (McWilliams, 1991, p32), but the growth of part-time employment in Northern Ireland was higher than in Britain between 1971 and 1989. According to Trewsdale, the typical part-time worker is a married women over 35 years old, in the service sector. But 23.8% of part-time workers are men, of whom nearly half are over

55 years old.[3] In 1981, 84.9% of female part time workers were in either distribution (26.1%) or 'other services' (58.8%), with only 8.3% in manufacturing (LFS, 1981).

The Labour Force Survey for 1991 shows different patterns of part-time working by religion. Catholic men are more likely than Protestant men to be working part time; the reverse is true for women.

Table 6.11 - Number of hours worked per week (% of employees)

	Males		Females	
Hours worked	C	P	C	P
1-15	3	1	14	16
16-30	9	3	24	27
over 30	**88**	**96**	**62**	**57**

Source: LFS, Religion Report, 1991

The relatively high rate of Catholic male part-time work probably reflects the difficulty of finding work. Taken together with the percentage in each community in employment, it further reduces the percentage of Catholic men in full-time work, while slightly increasing Catholic women's share.

Table 6.12 - Proportion of population of working age in full-time work, 1991 (%)

	Catholic		Protestant	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
% in work	60.8	49.8	79.2	61.1
% in full-time	**53.5**	**30.9**	**76.0**	**34.8**

Source: Calculated from tables 6.8 and 6.11

Only just over half of Catholic men of working age are in full-time employment, compared to over three quarters of Protestant men. If the incidence of part-time work were constant throughout the age groups, this would imply that only **48.7 %** (less than half) of Catholic men over the age of 44 are in full-time work. Since male part-time workers are disproportionately in the older age groups, this would reduce the figure still further.

While state social policy is geared to the notion of a 'male breadwinner', only just over half of Catholic men (and less than half in the older age group) are in the minimal position to perform that role. This is not compensated for by Catholic women's earnings, since they are less likely to be in work than Protestant women, particularly if their husbands are unemployed. The figures suggest a massive dependence on benefits, and consequent economic hardship.

The Labour Market

Osborne & Cormack (1987) argue that Catholic disadvantage is concentrated mainly in the unemployment differential, and that the pattern of employment for those in work is more equal (p17). But although unemployment shows a larger proportionate difference than any other indicator, and there is evidence of improvement in some occupational groups, the labour market remains highly structured by religion and gender, and Catholic disadvantage remains.

Sectoral distribution

The classification of industrial divisions has changed since 1971, but it is possible to see continuity of industrial specialisation. An FEA analysis of the 1971 returns (1977) showed substantial overrepresentation of Protestants in most sectors, particularly those of higher status. Catholics were overrepresented only in mining, construction, leather goods and clothing; employment in agriculture and miscellaneous services was roughly proportionate to the population.

Table 6.13 - Proportion of Catholics in selected industrial orders, 1971

Shipbuilding and marine engineering	4.8	(5.1)
Vehicles	11.7	(12.8)
Gas, electricity, water	15.4	(16.5)
Textiles	23.6	(25.5)
Clothing & Footwear	40.1	(44.2)
Construction	37.0	(41.2)
Insurance, banking, finance, other services	16.2	(17.7)
Public administration & defence	19.6	(21.5)
Miscellaneous services	31.8	(34.8)
Total population	31.4	(34.7)

(Note: first figure is for % defining themselves as Catholics; figures in brackets for % excluding not stated)

Source: FEA (1977)

In general the most heavily Protestant-dominated sectors were also male-dominated, but there were some specifically Protestant female and Catholic male areas. Ship-building, engineering and public utilities are the traditionally Protestant male manual strongholds, while Protestant males predominated in public administration. Within the manufacturing sector, there were significant differences in the Catholic representation between clothing and footwear (which accounted for 11.3% of female employment), and textiles which is more Protestant and employed more men. Insurance and banking was a Protestant sector for both sexes, while distribution was a major employer of Protestant women, accounting for 16.6% of female employment, of which 70.4% ((76.0) was Protestant. Professional and scientific services (24.7% of female employment) and other services (12.8%) were more evenly mixed, and included the Catholic female jobs of teaching and nursing. Construction was a Catholic male occupation.

The figures for later periods are not strictly comparable since the classification of orders has changed. Osborne and Cormack in their analysis of the 1981 Census show that 5 sub-divisions accounted for nearly half of both Protestant and Catholic male employment. While four of these were the same for both groups, their order of importance was different.

Table 6.14 - Male Employment by Industrial Order 1981 (% of employees in each sector)

Protestant Occupations		Catholic Occupations	
Industry	% of Prot employees	Industry	% of Catholic employees
Public administration defence, social security	14.9	Construction	16.7
Construction	9.8	Agriculture & horticulture	8.8
Agriculture & horticulture	7.5	Public admin-istration etc	8.8
Retail distribution	7.5	Retail distribution	7.5
Manufacture of transport equipment	5.3	Education	7.4
Total	**45.8**	Total	**49.2**

Source: Osborne & Cormack, 1987, pp 42-43

Catholic males were slightly more specialised than Protestants. The difference in public administration and defence, the largest employer of Protestant men, is mainly accounted for by the security forces, which are overwhelmingly Protestant. The figures reflect the decline in the traditional industrial base, and the rise in services, particularly the state sector. The growth of new industries is reflected in the importance of manufacture of transport equipment, which remains largely Protestant. This group also includes the Protestant strongholds Short Brothers and Harland & Wolff, which were nationalised at the time and heavily subsidised.

Women were more specialised than men, particularly Catholic women: 59% were in other services, compared to 49% of Protestant women. Protestant women continued to be overrepresented in finance and distribution, and in metal manufacture. Much of Catholic women's overrepresentation in services stems from 'Catholic women's' jobs: medical and other health services (including nursing) employed 19.2% of Catholic

women compared to 13.5% of Protestants; education employed 18.2% and 13.4% respectively (Osborne & Cormack, p45).

No comparable figures are yet available from the 1991 Census. Some information is given in the 1991 Labour Force Survey, but this uses very broad sub-divisions. The proportion of Catholics in the labour force had risen to over 40% by this time, so these figures show continuing underrepresentation of Catholics in manufacturing, and overrepresentation in construction.

Table 6.15 - Employees by religion and industrial sector, 1991

	Catholic (%)	Protestant(%)
Manufacturing	30	70
Construction	50	50
Services	40	60

Source: LFS Survey, 1991

Occupation

Occupation is closely tied to status and class, although there is considerable blurring within categories (for example nurses and nurse administrators are in one group). There have been substantial changes in the way occupations are classified since 1971, so direct comparison is impossible. Aunger, in his study of the 1971 Census, attributed the existence of a Catholic middle class to the high degree of social segregation, which ensured that professionals and small business people were needed to service each community. He observed that

> *"those non-manual occupations which have the largest proportions of Catholics, relative to the total number employed in the occupation, tend to be lower status occupations compared to those which have the highest proportions of Protestants" (cited in FEA, 1977, p13).*

He also pointed out that 'Catholic occupations' tend to be female and 'Protestant occupations' male. The classification of occupations changed between 1971 and 1981 making direct comparison impossible. But calculations from the 1981 census show that similar patterns persisted. The high level of 'non stated' distorts the figures, particularly

in certain groups. The religious proportion has been taken by excluding the 'non stated' group from the total.

Table 6.16a - Catholic and Protestant occupations, 1971

	Total Employed	% female	% Catholic
Catholic occupations			
publicans	2,026	21	73
waiters	2,145	84	50
hairdressers	2,928	76	49
domestic housekeepers	1,582	100	48
nurses	12,249	90	43
primary,secondary teachers	15,726	63	39
Protestant occupations			
company secretaries	347	15	7
'police officers and men'	4,046	3	10
chemists, biologists	711	11	11
engineers	3,282	3	12
managers	10,312	6	12
senior government officials	1,383	10	13

Source: FEA, 1977, p13

Table 6.16b - Catholic and Protestant occupations, 1981

	Total Employed	% female	% Catholic
Catholic occupations			
Managers,	3,198	33	40
Waiters, bar staff	3,295	59	44
Hairdressers, barbers	1,775	91	44
Nurse administrators, nurses	19,008	92	42
Primary, secondary teachers	21,890	63	41
Protestant occupations			
Marketing, sales, advertising etc	3,783	15	14
Policemen, firemen (sic) prison officers	5,762	8	7
Engineers	3,962	3	15
Scientists, physicists mathematicians	1,608	19	18
Teachers (higher education)	2,347	24	21
General administrators national govt	2,058	14	16

Source: 1981 Census

Osborne & Cormack (1987) argue that although in general Catholic occupations tend to be of low status, three of the most Catholic occupations are in high status groups (managerial, supervisory and legal), which represents a significant advance over 1971 (p56). But this comment is over optimistic. The managerial and supervisory professions they refer to are relatively low status within these groups (managers of hotels and clubs, which includes publican, a traditional Catholic occupation; and catering supervisor which is 60% female). A more appropriate indicator is the overall proportion in management. Women represent 13% of this group, and Catholics are in a minority of 21%. The law has always been a Catholic profession since lawyers tend to serve their own community.

Nursing is a 'Catholic women's occupation' which provided increasing opportunities as the welfare state expanded. But 59% of male employees were Catholics. Catholic males were also overrepresented in school teaching (43% of male teachers), but were only 19.5% of teachers in higher education. The latter is of higher status, and also religiously mixed, whereas at secondary level each group services its own community. The figures

reflect the tendency for Catholic men to enter traditionally 'female' occupations, as they have been excluded from the more 'male' occupations.

Table 6.17 - Religion and Occupation Order, 1981 (% of Catholic Employees)

		Total	Male	Female
1.	Professional & related supporting management	19	19	19
2.	Professional & related in education, welfare and health	37	35	38
3.	Literary, artistic, sports	23	25	20
4.	Professional % related in science, engineering etc	18	18	22
5.	Managerial	25	26	24
6.	Clerical and related	24	25	24
7.	Selling	23	23	23
8.	Security and protective	13	13	11
9.	Catering, cleaning, other personal services	32	39	31
10.	Farming	28	29	15
11.	Materials processing (excl metal and electrical)	33	33	34
12.	Processing (metal & electrical)	22	22	25
13.	Painting, assembling etc	27	30	23
14.	Construction, mining	42	42	41
15.	Transport operating	29	29	21
16.	Miscellaneous	31	31	30

Source: 1981 Census

The Catholic share of the economically active population was 31.3% (34.3%) so the table suggests that Catholic were underrepresented in all occupational groups except 2, 9, 11, 14 and 16. Representation of Catholic men was significantly higher than that of women in 9 and 13 which are low status occupations. Catholic women are better represented in 2 and 4. which are of higher status.

Occupational classification changed yet again at the beginning of the 1990s, replacing the previous classification with nine groups, "with an explicitly hierarchical structure" (Labour Force Survey for 1991, p17). The 1990 LFS Survey gives the latest information based on the previous occupation classification, under very broad headings. Because

of the relatively small size of the survey, some groups were too small to be included. This information is not broken down by sex.

Table 6.18 - Religion and Occupation Order, 1990 (% Catholic Employees)

	% Catholic
2. Professional & related in education, welfare and health	45
5. Managerial	26
6. Clerical and related	31
7. Selling	33
9. Catering, cleaning, other personal services	44
11. Materials processing (excl metal and electrical)	42
12. Processing (metal & electrical)	37
15. Transport operating	36

Source: LFS, Religion Report, 1990

There are substantial differences from the 1981 Census figures, which are too big to reflect entirely changes in the nine-year period. The sample size for the 1990 survey is too small (4001 responses) to give accurate estimates at this level of disaggregation. The large non-response to the religion question, may well mean that the Catholic share in employment in particular sectors is underestimated. Finally, the Catholic share of the economically active population increased from 31.3% (34.3) - again probably an underestimate - to 40% in 1990. Given these problems which makes meaningful comparison difficult, the two sets of figures indicate similar areas of representation in the two years.

Table 6.19 - Religion and Occupation, 1991 (% Catholic)

Total Economically active	35.1	[39.9]
1. Managers and Administrators	28.1	[32.2]
2. Professional occupations	36.2	[42.0]
3. Associate Professional and Technical	35.7	[41.6]
4. Clerical and Secretarial	29.6	[33.6]
5. Craft and related	38.2	[42.9]
6. Personal and Protective	29.2	[33.2]
7. Sales occupations	29.0	[32.9]
8. Plant and Machine operatives	34.1	[38.5]
9. Other Occupations	36.1	[40.0]

Source: 1991 Census, Summary Report

The Summary Report of the 1991 Census gives the religious composition of occupations based on the new classification, but the figures so far available use only the broad categories. These are of little use for comparing occupations over time in the Northern Ireland context. They combine for example personal services with protective services, which is particularly problematic in the context of 'Catholic' and 'Protestant jobs'. This shows Catholic underrepresentation in the highest status occupation (SOC1); in the 'Protestant occupations' clerical (SOC4) and sales (SOC7); and in personal and protective (SOC6) which includes the security forces.

Occupational Status

Aunger concluded from his study of the 1971 Census that

> *"Protestants are disproportionately represented in the non-manual and skilled manual occupations, while Catholics are disproportionately represented only in the semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed classes...It is particularly noteworthy that, while the median Protestant is a skilled manual workers, the median Catholic is a semi-skilled manual worker" (cited in FEA, p12).*

Table 6.20 - Occupational Class and Religion, 1971

	% Catholic	% Protestant
Professional Managerial	12	15
Lower grade non-manual	19	26
Skilled manual	17	19
Semi-skilled	27	25
Unskilled, unemployed	25	15
Total	100	100

Source: ibid, p 12

While it is not possible to compare them directly, the CHS figures for Socio-economic group suggest a similar pattern

Table 6.21 - Socioeconomic group by religion, all persons over 16

	1983-4		1985-7	
	C	P	C	P
Professional managerial	4	8	5	11
Other non manual	23	30	21	29
skilled manual	20	21	20	20
semi-skilled manual	26	23	28	23
unskilled manual	11	8	9	7
Insufficient information	15	9	16	10
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: CHS, 1989

These latter figures should be treated with caution due to the small sample size. The large percentage changes between the two periods, particularly in professional managerial, suggest sampling error. The high number of insufficient information includes those who have never worked, a larger group among Catholics.

Osborne and Cormack's analysis of the 1981 (1987) census based on the Registrar General's classification shows similar patterns of difference (pp 20-28). The more recent results from the FEC suggests that there has been some movement. Taking

SOCs 1 and 2 together as senior jobs, the FEC reports an increase from 31.5% to 32.4% in the Catholic share from the previous year. Given a Catholic share of 35.3% of the monitored workforce, this represents a small but significant underrepresentation.

These broad groups conceal substantial differences within categories. An FEC survey of senior public sector staff in 1990 showed that of employees earning over £35,000, 78.4% were Protestant; the figures for those earning between £25,000 and £35,0000 was 78.3% (FEC, 1990, p12).

Another issue of concern to the FEC is the high degree of religious segregation shown by their monitoring returns. Of 1,758 private firms returning monitoring information in 1991, 273 (employing 16,216 people) had a workforce consisting of 95% or more of one religion. They report that 60% of employees in single-site companies work in firms with substantial under representation of one community (FEC, 1991, p8).

While there are no comparable figures for the overall level of gender segregation, studies commissioned by the EOCNI have pointed to a high degree of both horizontal and vertical segregation in specific industries (see for example Ingram & McLaughlin, 1991; McGuire, 1987; Maguire, 1989). The clothing industry employs 16% of manufacturing employees. McLaughlin and Ingram found that 83% of the workforce was employed in highly sex-segregated occupations. Of 47 occupations on which data was collected, only five were not sex-segregated (p13). Maguire noted that although the workforce in retailing is 61% female, this was not evenly distributed. Women were 83% of staff in chemist shops, for example, but only 17% in motor vehicles and parts (p38). A survey of retail occupations in Belfast revealed that women were 64% of total staff, but only 32.2% of managers, and 26.5% of professional staff (ibid, p46). Respondents to the 1990 EOCNI survey were asked if they mainly worked alongside men, women or both. Just over a quarter (26%) said they worked with women; 58% with men and women; 10% worked alone; and 4% worked with men.

Education

The pattern of occupational specialisation by gender and religion appears to be reproduced partly through the education system. Osborne's 1985 study of religion and

education qualifications found a continuing tendency for Catholics to specialise in the arts and humanities, particularly among girls.

A small scale survey of job choice among secondary school pupils in Derry found continuing differences in aspirations. Although the numbers involved were small, and the range of occupations chosen limited, it illustrates the generally lower levels of expectation among Catholics. 50% of Protestant boys wanted to be foremen, as opposed to only 15% of Catholics. Teaching is by far the most popular non-manual occupation for Catholics, but less popular for Protestants. Another striking difference is the 10% of Catholic boys who chose the traditionally 'female' occupation of nursing, which was not chosen by any Protestant boys.

Table 6.22 - First choice of jobs of secondary school pupils (%)

	Catholic Boys	Protestant Boys	Catholic Girls	Protestant Girls
Bricklayer	30	15	0	0
Secretary	0	0	25	15
Nurse	10	0	15	15
Civil Servant	0	10	0	10
Bank Clerk	10	0	0	20
Teacher	35	25	60	35
Foreperson	15	50	0	5
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: McIlwaine, 1992

Attitudes to Work

Differences in the labour market experience of Protestant and Catholic women cannot be explained by the persistence of 'traditional attitudes'. A study for the EOCNI (Kremer & Curry, 1986) found that on a standard 'Attitudes to Women' scale, Catholics were noticeably more liberal than Protestants. This was true of both sexes, but was more significant for women. Catholic women had more progressive views, both in terms of work and general social attitudes. The most liberal views were held, however, by those who stated their religion as 'none' (p 27). The authors point out that overall attitudes

did not differ significantly from those measured in British surveys (p31). The crucial difference was that

> *"the younger male population do not seem to be as imbued with the spirit of liberalism as are their female counterparts ...(and) ... without the liberal lead normally provided by the young, or indeed the middle and professional classes then traditional attitudes and stereotypes are undoubtedly going to persist that much longer" (p51).*

It would appear that it is those people likely to be in positions of influence within the labour market who are most resistant to change. In a cautious conclusion to the last of the 'Womanpower' series, Trewsdale argues that equality legislation "although not ideal, has contributed to improving women's position in employment since the mid-1970s" (p47). The main problem, she argues, remains sex segregation, and the large number of low-paid and part-time workers, many of whom remain outside official statistics.

Income

Religious Differences

Figures are available for income, broken down by sex or religion but not both. The CHS provides figures for 1986-7 on personal income, based on self assessment of employed adults, by religion. These showed a significant difference in distribution between the two communities

Table 6.23 - Personal income, employed adults 1986-7 (%)

£	Catholic	Protestant
< 2,000	15	13
2,000 - 3,999	22	18
4,000 - 5,999	26	23
6,000 - 9,999	25	24
10,000 - 14,999	10	14
15,000 and over	3	7
Total	100	100

source: CHS Monitor, 1989

While almost two thirds (63%) of Catholics earned less than £6,000, the figure for Protestants was 54%. More than one in five (21%) Protestants earned over than £10,000 compared to just over one in eight (13%) Catholics. These figures are for people in work, and therefore do not take account of different levels of unemployment.

Table 6.24 - Gross household income from all sources, 1986-7 (%)

£	Catholic	Protestant
< 2,000	8	6
2,000 - 3,999	31	24
4,000 - 5,999	20	17
6,000 - 9,999	21	20
10,000 - 14,999	12	18
15,000 and over	9	14

Source: CHS Monitor, 1989

The addition of all household incomes reduces the numbers in the lowest category, but in spite of the larger average household size of Catholics, household income displays greater disparity than personal income. There are 59% of households earning under £6,000, compared to less than half (47%) of Protestant families. At the upper end, just over a fifth (21%) of Catholic households have incomes of more than £10,000, compared to almost a third (32%) of Protestant households. The difference at the bottom reflects different rates of unemployment, while at the top there is a larger proportion of two income families among Protestants.

Difference in household income is reflected in ownership of consumer durables. Protestant ownership for each item listed by the CHS is equal to or greater than Catholic. The difference tends to be greater for newer products, such as microwave ovens (8% difference) electric food mixers (18%) or freezers (26%). But even for the telephone, which many now regard as a necessity, there is a 15% differential. Car ownership is significantly lower for Catholics (52% compared to 61%). Access to a car is important in determining travel to work distance. There are differences in the standard of accommodation, with for example 13% of Catholics overcrowded, compared to 4% of Protestants.

Gender Differences

Women's hourly earnings have increased from 69.7% of men's in 1974, to 78.6% in 1989 (EOCNI, 1990). Average weekly earnings in 1991 were 80.2% of men's. But non-manual earnings were only 70.5%, and manual 72.5% (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1991). The higher average figure is because there are a greater proportion of women in the higher paid non-manual occupations.

Table 6.25 - Gross weekly earnings (including overtime) 1981-91

		Lowest Decile		Median	Highest Decile	
		£	% of median	£	£	% of median
Manual Men	1981	71.3	69.0	103.4	157.0	151.8
	1991	122.4	62.5	195.9	323.0	164.9
Non-manual men	1981	78.8	55.0	143.3	262.9	183.5
	1991	141.6	45.8	309.4	523.4	169.2
Manual Women	1981	48.3	69.8	69.2	100.9	145.8
	1991	91.8	71.2	129.0	201.4	156.1
Non-manual	1981	53.1	62.9	84.4	158.2	187.4
women	1991	111.0	55.3	200.6	349.1	174.0

Source: DED, unpublished figures

For all except manual women, employees in the bottom decile were earning proportionately less in 1991 than in 1981. This latter change was small (1.4%) whereas the increase in disparity ranged from 2.4% to 9.2%. At the top of the scale, the spread decreased for non-manual workers, but increased for manual workers. The figures include only full-time employees; the spread in earnings would have been larger had part-time employees been included.

The impact on the male-female differential is mixed. Between 1981 and 1991, the gap in median earnings widened for manual, and narrowed for non-manual workers. At the lower end, the differential became lower, while it widened at the top for non-manual workers. The median income of female workers in both cases was less than two thirds of the male rate.

Table 6.26 - Women's earnings as percentage of men's

		Lowest Decile	Median	Highest Decile
Manual	1981	67.7	66.9	64.3
	1991	75.0	65.9	62.4
Non-manual	1981	67.4	58.9	60.2
	1991	78.4	64.8	66.7

Source: calculated from above

Taken together the two sets of figures suggest that Catholic women suffer doubly from low income in work, as well as being less likely to be in formal employment than any other group.

Unpaid Labour

The burden of unpaid domestic labour continues to fall overwhelmingly on women. Campbell et al (1990) found that men were unlikely to take responsibility for domestic labour even if they were not in paid work. Using CHS data, they found that among unemployed men whose wives were in work, only 16% described themselves as keeping house, while only 1% did so if their wife was also unemployed.

A survey of the sexual division of labour in the household undertaken for the study, showed a clear separation of male and female tasks. Women with children did 4 times more domestic labour than men; women without children did 2 and a half times more. On average women with children spent 51 hours per week on housework and childcare, compared to 13 hours for men. Even where the woman was in paid employment she still carried the bulk of domestic responsibility, reducing her leisure time, and reorganising domestic tasks to evenings and weekends.

Conclusion

The figures discussed above suggest that in spite of equality legislation and the expansion of state employment, patterns of disadvantage by both sex and religion

persist. The most obvious indicator is the continuity of the unemployment differential, while income levels show economic disadvantage both for those in work and outside. Current legislation makes individually motivated acts of religious or sexual discrimination more difficult, but patterns of disadvantage and segregation have been laid down over a considerable number of years and

> *"led to the acceptance of patterns of advantage, exclusion and segregation as part of every-day life ... current patterns can be the result of past discrimination sustained by contemporary practices and behaviour which are not overtly discriminatory" (Osborne & Cormack, 1983, p228)*

Although most commentators believe that Catholic women suffer disadvantage primarily on account of sex, Campbell et al (1990) found that

> *"Catholic females still suffer problems on account of their religious denomination as well as their gender. This is reflected in their status within, rather than their exclusion from, certain occupations" (p70)*

The greatest degree of difference is in access to the formal labour market, with Catholic men unable to take on the 'breadwinner' role, while Catholic women are not able to substitute in this role. But the figures also reveal a continuing pattern of specialisation by those in work by occupation and industrial group. This reflects the differential relation of each group to the state and the labour market.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. According to Compton's estimates of the religion of non-respondents, these were disproportionately Catholic in 1971, and more evenly distributed in 1981 (cited in Cormack & Osborne, p1). But even if these estimates are accepted, they do not necessarily apply to each individual region.

2. This phrase is used to describe people who are engaging in informal paid employment while claiming benefit.

3. Seminar paper on *Part-time Employment* by J. Trewsdale, Department of Economics, QUB, March 20th 1992.

Private Sector Employment

Introduction

The next two chapters examine in more detail sections of the private and public sectors, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the patterns of religious and gender disadvantage revealed in Chapter Six.

This chapter is concerned with the private sector. It concentrates particularly on multinational companies, in an attempt to provide some empirical evidence for the continuing debate about the relationship between multinationals and sectarianism. As Teague (1987) argues, there has been a tendency on both sides of the *anti-imperialist/revisionist* debate to view multinationals as homogeneous, with a common, and uni-dimensional, impact on socio-economic conditions, in particular on sectarianism (p165). The material discussed below shows a more complex picture.

The existence of the MacBride campaign is itself evidence that multinational corporations do not automatically undermine discrimination. Patrick Doherty, speaking for the campaign, put it like this:

> *"when American companies were opening facilities, it became a question of when in Rome, do as the Romans do, and it was fairly easy to (even in some cases inadvertently), fall into a system in which sectarianism was at the very least tolerated" (IRRC, 1990, p3).*

The campaign around the MacBride Principles and the subsequent Fair Employment legislation has forced these companies to examine their employment practices. They must make at least a formal commitment to equal opportunities, and are required to monitor the composition of the workforce regularly. But the actual implementation of employment practices varies, as policy depends on the corporate priorities of the

individual firm, and for example the degree of autonomy of the local plant. US firms tend to be decentralised relative to those from East Asia, and it is top management in these companies which displays the greatest sectarian imbalance.[1] The outcome of these policies also depends on the location of the firm within Northern Ireland, itself not a neutral issue.

The Industrial Development Board (IDB), the body responsible for attracting foreign capital and negotiating state subsidies, does not appear to prioritise fair employment. Its Annual Report for 1990-91 makes no mention of religious, or of gender equality. The many pictures of prominent IDB personnel reveal an all male Board and top management, with a male director of every division. The only two women staff members pictured are identified merely by their division. The only reference to 'social' issues was a short section on Making Belfast Work headed *Special Initiatives*. This stated that the IDB is "playing its full part in the effort to address the serious problems in these areas" (p69), and reported that work had started on two advance factories in West Belfast.

In the year 1990-1, just under 25% of new jobs assisted by the IDB were in Belfast. Sixteen companies which received more than £5,000 in assistance were based in Belfast: of these, eleven were monitored in 1991, while the others had not yet become established. The returns show that four of these firms, (with a total workforce of 159) employed less than 10 Catholics; another three had a significant underrepresentation of Catholics: Baker Hughes employed 262, of which over 90% were Protestant; the Cooperative Wholesale Society employed 562, (over 80% Protestant); Linfield Group employed 635 (over 70%). Catholics were in a majority in two small firms employing a total of 69. In the other two, Catholics were overrepresented: Platform which employed 141 (55% Protestant); and Ford, in West Belfast, employed 716 (58%).

These figures suggest that IDB funds are serving to renew existing patterns of sectarian division rather than to challenge them.

The first section of this chapter deals with the general pattern of employment in the private sector; the second part is concerned with multinational companies; the third part examines in more detail North American companies, including two individual firms; the fourth examines the British-dominated financial sector.

The FEC Monitoring Returns

Most of the information in this chapter is based on the 1991 Fair Employment monitoring returns. Although compulsory monitoring of firms employing over 25 people begun in 1990, publication of the details of individual firms was delayed until 1992, with the second year's monitoring returns. This was published as the FEC's *Second Research Report*.

The religious composition of individual firms is given, under the categories *Protestant*; *Catholic* and *Non Determined*. Employers have the responsibility for determining the religion of employees, and may use one of three methods: educational background (particularly primary school data); self-identification by the employee; or the *residuary* method - the use of

> *"a number of pieces of information about an individual which, if known, can give a reasonable indication of community background" (FEC, 1992, p2).*

The non determined category includes those originating from outside Northern Ireland, as well as those for it was not possible to determine a religion. The FEC's methods are concerned with establishing *community background* rather than religious belief. This differs from the census, where the category *none* allows people to refuse a religious identification.

The report gives details of 1708 individual firms[2] employing over 25 people for which monitoring information was submitted, with a total employment of 196,940. Where there are less than 10 employees of one religious group, only the total number of employees is given. It also contains a summary of the monitoring returns, which gives global information broken down by sex, occupation and industrial structure.

The data on individual firms is limited in a number of ways: most serious for the purposes of this work, it is not broken down by gender. The reason given by the FEC is the legal requirement that no individual's religion should be identified; breaking the data down further would make individual cell sizes too small to guarantee anonymity. Individual firms' returns give only the total numbers employed from each religious group, with no details of the occupational structure. They do not distinguish between part-time and full-time employees. A further problem is that in multi-site operations, an

apparently religiously balanced workforce may disguise high degrees of segregation on individual sites.

The information excludes all firms employing less than 25 people, and any which did not submit returns although required to under the legislation.[3] Some smaller firms submitted information, which is included in the summary. Employment in these firms was less than 3,000, and the religious composition of the workforce is the same when they are excluded, so it is safe to assume that the patterns revealed in the general analysis are replicated for the firms for which individual information is available.

The data below is supplemented with additional material, including reports of FEC investigations into individual companies and sectors; investigations carried out by the US-based Inventory Responsibility Research Centre on US firms (Booth & Bertsch, 1989); and interviews with equal opportunities managers, and material supplied by individual firms. The FEC also supplied me with information on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of individual monitored firms, and the gender composition of large firms.

The tables below are based on a combination of these sources. For those taken from the FEC's own analysis of the monitoring returns, the source given is *Summary of Monitoring Returns* with the appropriate page number. Others were constructed from individual firms' monitoring returns, and the source is given as *FEC monitoring returns*. In general, figures for religious composition are given in () brackets where they refer to the percentage of the total workforce; and in [] brackets where they refer to percentages of the total whose religion was determined (excluding non determined).

The Monitored Workforce

The monitored private sector workforce was 34% Catholic (35.1% excluding the non determined category). The total workforce according to the 1991 Census was 35.22% Catholic (39.8% if the categories *none* and *not stated* are excluded). The figures suggest underrepresentation of Catholics, particularly Catholic men, in private employment.

Although an accurate figure for the non-monitored private sector workforce is not available, it is possible to make an estimate using figures for the workforce as a whole. In June 1991, there were 304,540 employees in employment excluding Other Services, which are predominantly public (NIEC, 1991b, p22). This suggests a minimum of 105,163 people in non-monitored private employment, or over a third of the private sector workforce.

Table 7.1 - Religious composition of monitored workforce, 1991

	Protestant	Catholic		Non-Determined	Total
Male	73,551	37,059		4,464	115,074
	(63.9)[66.5]	(32.2)	[33.5]	(3.9)	(57.7)
Female	51,575	30,713		2,014	84,303
	(61.2) [62.7]	(36.4)	[37.3]	(2.4)	(42.3)
Total	125,127	67,772		6,478	199,377
	(62.8)[64.9]	(34.0)	[35.1]	(3.2)	(100)

Source: FEC Summary of 1991 Monitoring Returns, p50

Occupation, gender and religion

Table 7.2 shows marked specialisations by gender and religion. 60.8% of male employees are concentrated in three occupations (SOCs 5, 8 and 1) while a similar proportion of women (59.7%) are in SOCs 4, 8 and 7. Only 8 (plant and machine operatives) is common. Apart from 8, only 9 (other occupations) and 3 (associate professional and technical) employ comparable proportions of men and women. There are clearly male and female occupations.

Differences in religious composition are smaller, but significant. Some discrepancies appear due to the exclusion of the non determined category. For example, 16.3% of SOC2 are non Determined presumably due to the large number in professional occupations who originate from outside Northern Ireland.

Table 7.2 - Private Sector Employment by Occupation

	Male P	C	Female P	C	Total male	Total female
SOC1: Managers and administrators	70.7 [11.8]	29.3 [9.6]	62.0 [4.7]	38.0 [4.8]	[11.1]	[4.8]
SOC2: Professional occupations	67.9 [3.7]	32.1 [3.4]	56.8 [1.7]	43.2 [2.2]	[4.1]	[2.1]
SOC3: Associate Professional & Tech	74.1 [6.7]	25.9 [4.7]	60.3 [4.6]	39.7 [5.1]	[6.1]	[4.9]
SOC4: Clerical Secretarial	72.3 [7.2]	27.7 [5.5]	70.8 [28.1]	29.2 [19.5]	[6.6]	[24.8]
SOC5: Craft & Skilled Manual	68.2 [27.5]	31.8 [25.5]	56.8 [9.3]	43.2 [11.8]	[26.6]	[10.8]
SOC6: Personal & Protective Services	60.8 [3.7]	39.2 [4.8]	55.4 [6.1]	44.6 [8.3]	[4.1]	[7.0]
SOC7: Sales	67.5 [7.4]	32.5 [7.1]	64.8 [15.2]	35.2 [13.8]	[7.2]	[14.6]
SOC8: Plant & Machine Operatives	63.2 [22.2]	36.8 [25.7]	56.7 [18.6]	43.3 [23.8]	[23.1]	[20.3]
SOC9: Other	58.5 [9.7]	41.5 [13.7]	65.0 [11.7]	35.0 [10.5]	[11.0]	[11.2]

Note: The first set of figures are for Protestant or Catholic as a percentage of those for whom a religion was determined. Figures in [] brackets are for the proportion of each group in that occupation.

Source: FEC, Summary of 1991 monitoring returns, pp54-5

Catholic men are underrepresented (relative to their general under-representation in the monitored workforce) in all occupations except 6, 8 and 9. The difference is fairly small in 2, 5 and 7; it is significant in 1 and 4; particularly large in 3. Catholic women are underrepresented in only three occupations, 4, 7 and 9, most significantly in clerical and secretarial work. This is the most numerous occupation for Protestant women, but only second for Catholic women. They are most highly represented in the low status personal services, but are also overrepresented in professional occupations and in manual occupations associated with manufacturing.

Only clerical and secretarial appears to be a distinctly Protestant occupation, while 6 (personnel and protective) and 8 (plant and machine operatives) are Catholic. But there are Protestant male occupations (1, 3, and to a lesser extent 5); Protestant female (4); Catholic male (8, 9); and Catholic female (2, 6 and 8).

Table 7.3 - Private Sector Employment by Industrial Sector

	Male P	C	Female P	C	Total male	Total female
SIC0: Agriculture, forestry, fish	45.0 [0.04]	55.0 [0.08]	40.0 [0.02]	60.0 [0.05]	[0.05]	[0.04]
SIC1: Energy, water supply	65.6 [0.05]	34.4 [0.06]	80.0 [0.02]	20.0 [0.01]	[0.05]	[0.01]
SIC2: Minerals, chemicals	55.0 [5.2]	45.0 [8.5]	67.8 [2.0]	32.2 [1.6]	[6.2]	[1.9]
SIC3: Engineering Vehicles	77.9 [23.3]	22.1 [13.1]	67.9 [8.2]	32.1 [6.5]	[19.8]	[7.5]
SIC4: Other Manufacturing	67.2 [24.6]	32.8 [23.9]	58.2 [29.2]	41.8 [35.3]	[24.1]	[31.3]
SIC5: Construction Construction	56.1 [7.9]	43.9 [12.4]	69.2 [1.1]	30.8 [0.8]	[9.4]	[1.0]
SIC6:Distribution, hotel, catering	65.1 [17.1]	34.9 [18.2]	65.4 [27.0]	34.6 [24.0]	[17.3]	[25.8]
SIC7: Transport, construction	67.2 [5.0]	33.8 [4.9]	60.7 [2.0]	39.3 [2.2]	[5.1]	[2.0]
SIC8:Banking, insurance, finance	72.6 [9.7]	27.4 [7.6]	70.7 [12.3]	29.3 [8.6]	[8.8]	[10.9]
SIC9: Other Services	54.3 [7.0]	45.7 [11.7]	59.2 [18.0]	40.8 [20.9]	[9.1]	[19.5]

Note: The first set of figures are Protestant or Catholic as percentage of those for whom a religion was determined. Figures in [] brackets are for proportion of each group in that occupation.

Source: FEC, Summary of 1991 Monitoring Returns, pages 60-61

For both males and females the most numerous industry is 'other manufacturing', although it is more important for women. Nearly a fifth of men are in engineering and vehicle manufacture compared to one in twelve women. Concentration is significantly higher for women, with 87.5% of employees in four industries, compared to 70.3% of men. Catholic men are underrepresented in 3, 4 and 8. The difference is greatest for 3: the second largest male employer, it is a distinctly Protestant male area. Banking and insurance shows sizeable Catholic underrepresentation for both sexes. Catholic women are overrepresented in 4, 7 and 9. Other manufacturing, employs over a third of Catholic women, but Catholic men are underrepresented in this sector.

There are, therefore, Protestant male industries (3, 8); Catholic male (5, 9); Protestant female (8) and Catholic female (4, 9).

Size of Private Sector Firms

The proportion of Catholics employed is inversely related to the size of firms.

Table 7.4 - Religious composition by company size (%)

No of Employees	Protestant	Catholic	% of Total Employees
less than 51	61.4	38.6	16.0
1-100	63.4	36.6	17.0
101-250	64.1	35.9	21.5
251 +	66.9	33.1	45.6

Source: FEC, Summary of 1991 monitoring returns, p62

This trend continues for firms employing over 500, with the Catholic proportion falling still further.

Table 7.5 - Employment in large firms (> 500 employees)

	Protestant	Catholic	Non-Determined	Total
Male	25,190 (69.6)	9,473 (26.2)	1,515	36,178
Female	17,665 (58.8)	11,660 (38.8)	723	30,048
Total	43,330 (65.4)	21,133 (31.9)	2,238	66,226
	[67.7]	[32.3]		

Source: Unpublished data from 1991 monitoring returns

Total Catholic representation is lower in firms employing over 500 (32.3%) this is due to shortfall of Catholic males, while there is a higher proportion of Catholic women in large firms.

Table 7.6 - Religious and sex composition of employment by company size (% of total where religion was determined)

No of	Male		Female	
Employees	Protestant	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic
<500	63.7	36.3	64.0	36.0
>500	72.7	27.3	60.2	39.8

Source: Unpublished data from 1991 Monitoring Returns

This imbalance reflects the phenomenon of predominantly Protestant male plants (for example engineering) and Catholic female plants (for example clothing) which are common in large companies.

Religious Segregation

The FEC reports that of the 1708 monitored firms listed, 814 (48%) had less than 10 employees of one religion. The actual religious composition of these firms is not given, due to the requirement not to identify the religion of an individual. Of these firms, 559 (68.7%) were mainly Protestant, and 255 (31.3%) Catholic. The majority (70.9%) were small with less than 51 employees. This means that the maximum percentage of the minority religion (ie if there were 9 employees) ranges from 34.6% to 18% for this group. Most of the other firms (25.3%) were in the 51-100 range implying a maximum minority representation of between 17.6% and 9%; 28 firms employed between 101 and 250 (8.9% to 3.6%); three employed over 250. All the last three were Catholic: Sean Quinn which employed 271 (maximum Protestant percentage 3.3%); Glen Electric, 320 (2.8%); United Technologies, 739 (1.2%).

These firms employed 39,379 people (19.8% of employees in monitored firms), of which 26,380 (67%) were in Protestant firms, and 12,999. (33%) in Catholic firms. For convenience, these are referred to below as *Protestant-segregated* or *Catholic-segregated* to distinguish them from the other group with a religious imbalance. The latter are firms where the religious composition is given but one religion is substantially underrepresented. These are referred to below as *Protestant-dominated* and *Catholic-dominated*.

Table 7.7 - Firms with less than 25% of one religious group

% of majority religion	Protestant-dominated		Catholic-dominated		Total	
	no	empl	no	empl	no	empl
>90%	24	9,713	4	675	28	10,388
80-89.9%	123	34,391	29	5,024	152	39,415
75-79.9%	84	16,204	23	3,763	107	19,967
Total	231	60,308	56	9,462	287	69,770

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns for 1991

This group employed over a third of employees (35%). Together with segregated firms, they total over a half (54.8%) of the monitored workforce. Even this underestimates the amount of segregation, due to multi-site operations. For example the US company Lee Apparel has an almost evenly balanced workforce (45.6% Protestant), but this is achieved with a predominantly Protestant plant at Newtownards (91.4% in 1988), and a Catholic (97.5% in 1988) plant in Derry (Booth & Bertsch, 1989 p118). Segregation also has a gender dimension, with the Catholic workforce in Derry predominantly female, and the workforce at Newtonards predominantly male.[4]

While most segregated firms were small, the latter group tend to be larger, including for example the largest private sector firm, Short Brothers. Most (80.4%) are Protestant-dominated, with 86.4% of the employees in this group. When the two groups are broken down by industrial sector, different patterns emerge for the two communities.

Four of the 24 most Protestant-dominated firms (>90%), including Harland and Wolff, are in engineering and vehicles, and fifteen in other manufacturing. Together these account for 88.8% of total employment. By contrast, there are only four firms with more than 90% Catholic employment; these are much smaller, with half the employment in other services. A more mixed picture emerges for those employing over 80% of one religion. The Protestant firms are still dominated by manufacturing (56.3% of employment), with 36% in engineering and vehicles. But there is a significant proportion in distribution and banking, while none of the Catholic firms are in these groups. Over two thirds of employment in Catholic-dominated firms are in manufacturing, almost all in general manufacturing, and 61% of this in the traditional Catholic industry, clothing. While the Protestant group includes some of the largest

companies in Northern Ireland, Catholic dominated firms are generally much smaller; only one firm employs more than a thousand, and four over 250. Four of the five are clothing companies.

Table 7.8 - Employment by SIC (Protestant and Catholic-dominated firms)

	Protestant Firms				Catholic Firms			
	>90%		>80%		>90%		>80%	
	no	empl	no	empl	no	empl	no	empl
SIC2: Minerals & chemicals	1 4.2	272 2.8	4 3.3	717 2.1	1 25	122 18.1	2 6.9	179 3.6
SIC3: Engineering, vehicles	4 16.7	3536 36.4	11 8.9	12650 36.8	--	--	2 6.9	272 5.4
SIC4: Other Manufacturing	15 62.5	5088 52.4	30 24.4	6695 19.5	--	--	12 41.4	3316 66.0
SIC5: Construction	1 4.2	353 3.6	11 8.9	1613 4.7	--	--	6 20.7	665 13.2
SIC6: Distribution, hotel	1 4.2	139 1.4	32 26.0	5638 16.4	--	--	--	--
SIC7: Transport communication	2 8.3	325 3.3	2 1.6	166 0.5		--		
SIC8: Banking insurance, finance	24 19.5	5577 16.2	1 25	202 30.0				
SIC9: Other Services	--	9 7.3	1317 3.8	2 50	351 52.0		7 24.1	592 11.8

Note: lower figures are percentages of each group in that SIC

Source: FEC monitoring returns for 1991; unpublished data from monitoring returns

Segregated firms are, with three exceptions, relatively small, and more evenly spread between industrial sectors. Over a third of Catholic firms are in other services, predominantly religious, education and community groups which serve the Catholic community. One in five Protestant-segregated firms are in this group. Protestant dominance of financial services is evident, with 48 of the Protestant firms in this sector, compared with only five small Catholic firms.

These patterns reflect the structure of ownership of capital in Northern Ireland. A large number of small Catholic-owned firms employ mainly Catholics, and a similar relative number of Protestant firms. But the large firms tend to be Protestant-owned (either currently or in the past), and, except where they operate in overwhelmingly Catholic areas, have established exclusionary practices against Catholics. The large Catholic-dominated firms have a predominantly female workforce, whereas

Protestant-dominated firms are largely male. Exclusionary practices were aimed at maintaining both gender and religious dominance.

Table 7.9 - Employment by SIC (segregated firms)

	Protestant Firms		Catholic Firms	
	no	empl	no	empl
SIC0: Agriculture	1	29	1	55
forestry, fish	0.02	0.1	0.4	0.4
SIC1: Energy,	1	37	----	
water supply	0.02	0.1		
SIC2: Minerals,	29	1127	13	469
chemicals	5.2	4.3	5.2	3.6
SIC3: Engineering	51	2198	20	1691
Vehicles	9.1	8.3	7.9	13.0
SIC4: Other	121	6346	43	1883
Manufacturing	2.2	24.1	17.1	14.5
SIC5: Construction	42	1696	41	1790
	7.5	6.4	16.3	13.8
SIC6: Distribution,	146	6869	40	2099
hotel, catering	26.0	26.0	15.9	16.1
SIC7: Transport	18	863	2	108
communication	3.2	3.3	0.8	0.8
SIC8: Banking,	48	2043	5	153
insurance, finance	8.6	7.7	2.0	1.2
SIC9: Other Services	104	5053	86	4499
	18.5	19.2	34.1	34.6

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns for 1991; unpublished data from monitoring returns

Segregation and Location

A marked difference emerges in comparing the location of these religiously segregated firms. The Summary Report of the 1991 Census gives religious composition for the 26 District Council districts, which are the most detailed figures yet available for that year. This is only a crude measure of 'labour availability': there are major intra-regional differences in religious composition; while different occupational groups have different average travel to work distances, with higher status occupations tending to recruit from further afield.

Table 7.10a shows that all the large Catholic-dominated firms are in predominantly Catholic areas, while the reverse is not true (Table 10.b). There are 36 firms employing more than 250 people which are more than 80% Protestant: of these, 11 are in

predominantly Protestant areas, while 6 are in mainly Catholic areas. Of the rest, 7 are in Belfast, and 7 operate throughout Northern Ireland (generally with headquarters in Belfast) so their employment should approximate to the Northern Ireland average: 3 are on mixed sites, and 2 are in Craigavon, where the Protestant population is roughly the same as the Northern Ireland average. The existence of Protestant-dominated firms across Northern Ireland reflects Protestant control of political and economic power.

Table 7.10a - Location of Catholic firms

Firm	Empl-oyment	Location	% Prot (work-force)	% Prot (District Council)
> 90% Catholic				
Belleek Pottery	122	Fermanagh	8.2	41.6
Londonderry Inner City Trust	169	Derry	9.0	25.4
Newry & Mourne Co-op	202	Newry	9.1	21.6
Aid (Community)	182	*	9.9	
>80% Catholic (>250 employees)				
Adria	1047	Strabane/ Fermanagh	12.3	35.1/ 41.6
Arntz Belting	260	Derry	12.4	25.4
Sherman, Ben	437	Derry/Armagh	12.7	25.4/51.0
Sca packaging	254	Newry	15.7	21.6
City Shirt Co	391	Derry	16.5	25.4
Catholic Segregated firms (>250 employees)				
Glen Electric	320	Newry & Mourne		21.6
Sean Quinn	271	Fermanagh		41.6
United Technologies	739	Derry		25.4

Note: Protestant percentages in District Council areas are of total for whom a religion was stated
* Location unknown

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns; 1991 Census (Summary Report)

Table 7.10b - Location of Protestant firms (>250 employees)

Firm	Empl-oyment	Location	% Prot	% Prot (work-force)	(District Council)
>90% Protestant					
Sunblest bakeries	365	Belfast	96.4		54.9
Henry Bros	353	Magherafelt	96.3		37.2
Howden Sirocco	408	Belfast	95.3		54.9
Harland and Wolf	2691	Belfast	94.3		54.9
Ambler	298	Newtownabbey	93.8		84.7
Dale Farm Dairies	472	NI, Belfast HQ	93.7		56.9/54.9
N.I. Spinners	409	Ards	93.1		86.7
Ulster Carpet Mills	605	Craigavon	92.9		55.2
Berkshire Hosiery	408	Ards	92.6		86.7
Hughes Tools	262	Belfast	92.5		54.9
Campbell Henry	347	Newtownabbey	91.9		84.7
Bairdwear	589	Down	91.2		37.2
CV Carpets	340	Down	90.8		37.2
3M Industrial tapes	272	Down	90.4		37.2
Ewart Liddell	323	Down	90.1		37.2
>80% Protestant					
Turkington	254	Craigavon	88.5		55.2
Charles Hurst	453	NI, Belfast HQ	87.9		56.9/54.9
Short Bros	8647	Belfast	87.6		54.9
Gallaher	1574	Ballymena	86.8		79.6
Supermac	253	Belfast	86.7		54.9
Lummus Mackie	626	Belfast	86.3		54.9
Henderson	327	NI	85.8		56.9
Co-op	562	NI, Belfast HQ	85.5		56.9/54.9
Securicor	560	Belfast/Omagh	85.2		54.9/31.6
Crestacare	529	NI, Belfast HQ	85.0		56.9/54.9
Camco	286	Newtownabbey	84.7		84.7
Northern Telecom	1813	Newtownabbey/ Belfast	84.3		84.7/54.9
Barbour Campbell	317	Lisburn	84.2		69.3
Rfd	317	Lisburn	84.0		69.3
J Graham	331	Dromore, Down	83.3		37.2
Compass Services	965	Cookstown/ Belfast	83.0		43.1/54.9
F.G. Wilson	590	Newtownabbey	82.5		84.7
Cantrell & Cochrane	282	Belfast	81.6		54.9
Dairy Produce Packer	343	Coleraine	81.3		74.7
Northern Bank	2275	NI, Belfast HQ	81.1		56.9/54.9
O'Kane Poultry	555	Ballymena	80.2		79.6

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns; 1991 Census (Summary Report)

Appointments

Firms employing over 250 people were required to submit information on appointees in the last year. More males made applications (54.3%) but only 42.5% of appointees were male, indicating a lower success rate for male applicants. This reflects the decline

in traditional male employment and expansion of female employment, which means more men than women are competing for the same jobs.

Table 7.11 - Applicants and Appointees to large firms (total)

	applicants			appointees		
	p	c	total	p	c	total
male	39,533	25,244	69,277	5,080	2,706	8,174
female	31,118	24,555	58,307	5,966	4,708	11,066
total	70,651	49,799	127,584	11,046	7,414	19,240

Note: totals include non-determined

source: FEC Summary of 1991 monitoring returns, pp73-4

Catholic women were overrepresented by 6.8% in both applicants and appointees compared to their share in the workforce, and the chance of being appointed was the same for both communities. Catholics men were significantly less likely than Protestants to be appointed, (with a 4.2% lower share of appointees than applicants). Even so, the Catholic male proportion of appointees was slightly above their representation in employment (1.3%). The disproportionate number of Catholic applications belies the suggestion that Catholics do not actively seek work.

Table 7.12 - Religion and sex of applicants and appointees, 1991 (%)

	applicants		appointees	
	p	c	p	c
male	61.0	39.0	65.2	34.8
female	55.9	44.1	55.9	44.1
total	58.7	41.3	59.8	40.2

Source: adapted from above

Appointees are not spread evenly across occupational groups. The Catholic male proportion of appointees is higher than their proportion among employees in all SOCs except 5 and 9; they were only 18.1% of appointees in 5 (Craft and skilled manual). Catholics were disproportionately represented in SOCs 1 and 2 (managerial and professional) but together they make up only 6.5% of all appointments. The largest

group of Catholic appointees is in SOC8 (plant and machine operatives) while for Protestant men it is SOC5.

For women the Catholic proportion of appointees is greater than the proportion of employees in all except 3, 6 and 9. There are more Catholic than Protestant appointees in SOCs 2 and 8. SOC2 is a high status occupation, but it represents only 1.4% of total female appointments. SOC8 is lower status; it accounts for 28.7% of female appointments, but 36% of Catholic appointments are in this group, compared to only 23.2% Protestant.

A small increase in the proportion of Catholics appointments is evident, most significantly for women. But while Catholics are gaining a larger proportion of the small number of higher status appointments, patterns in the major sectors of employment are being perpetuated and even accentuated. Catholic men are dramatically underrepresented in skilled manual occupations, while the largest group of Catholic males is in unskilled and semi-skilled manual work. The pattern is not so clearly marked for women, but the biggest increase in employment for Catholic women is also in low status occupations. This is consistent with evidence from the 1991 Census, that Catholics with higher education qualifications are less disadvantaged relative to Protestants than those with other (or no) qualifications (see Chapter Six).

Table 7.13 - Private Sector Appointments by Occupation

	Male		Female		Total
	P	C	P	C	
SOC1: Managers, administrators	145 56.9	110 43.1	109 61.2	69 38.8	464
SOC2: Professional Occupations	116 58.9	81 41.1	44 39.3	68 60.7	413
SOC3: Associate Professional/tech	268 70.0	115 30.0	228 67.9	108 32.1	761
SOC4: Clerical, secretarial	333 65.8	173 34.2	751 66.6	376 33.4	1,679
SOC5: Craft, skilled manual	1,311 81.9	290 19.1	807 56.0	634 44.0	3,162
SOC6: Personal, protective services	295 56.0	232 44.0	351 57.7	257 42.3	1,202
SOC7: Sales	760 59.7	514 40.3	1,609 57.9	1,170 42.1	4,198
SOC8: Plant & machine operatives	1,278 59.2	882 40.8	1,386 45.0	1,693 55.0	5,413
SOC9: Other	574 65.0	309 35.0	681 67.2	333 44.1	1,948

Note: Lower figures are percentages of total whose religion was determined

Source: FEC Summary of monitoring returns, pp 78-9

Appointees in large firms

Although the average Catholic proportion of appointees is greater than the proportion of employees, a very uneven picture emerges from the returns of individual firms. Information on appointments was submitted by 123 firms employing over 250. For 65 of these, the proportion of Catholics appointed was greater than their proportion in the workforce; for another 23, it was less; for 15, the difference was less than 1% either way. The proportion of appointees in 20 firms was not published due to the requirement not to identify an individual's religion. For the three large Catholic-segregated firms the original proportion of Catholics was not available for comparison. The following tables compare employment and appointee proportions for the most segregated firms discussed above. No information is available on the most Catholic-dominated firms, since none employ more than 250.

Table 7.14a - Appointees in large Catholic firms

>80% Catholic	Empl-oyment	Appoint-ments	Prot % employees	Prot % of appointees	Diff %
Adria	1047	177	12.8	9.6	3.2
Arntz Belting	260	25	12.4	8.3	4.1
Sherman, Ben	437	98	12.7	18.4	-5.7
Sca packaging	254	1	15.7	n/a	----
City Shirt Co	391	94	16.5	13.0	3.5
Segregated firms					
Glen Electric	320	119	n/a	2.5	----
Sean Quinn	271	18	n/a	n/a	----
United Technologies	739	390	n/a	1.0	----

Note: - sign indicates an increase in the Protestant percentage

Source: FEC monitoring returns

The most Catholic dominated firms are becoming even more segregated. These eight firms made 922 appointments, of which at least 831 were Catholic (the number is unknown for 2 firms). This represents 11.2% of all Catholic appointees. Excluding these firms would reduce the Catholic proportion of appointments from 40.2% to 37.5%.

There was little overall change in the large Protestant firms, especially those with over 90% Protestant workforces. The largest percentage changes in religious composition are generally where few appointments are made. Harland & Wolff, the fourth most Protestant firm, made a large number of appointments, which actually increased the Protestant share slightly. Only one firm in this group (Dale Farm Dairies) made a substantial number of appointments with a significantly lower Protestant ratio.

In the next group, there were some more significant changes. Crestacare (whose appointments were almost as large as total employment) Compass Services and Securicor all made over 150 appointments, with a significantly lower Protestant ratio among appointees. But there were three companies whose ratio increased, including two which made over 200 appointments. Short Brothers, the largest employer, made the largest number of appointments, (approximately a tenth of its total workforce). The Protestant composition was only 4% less than in the workforce as a whole: such a difference would change the overall workforce composition by only 0.4%. Northern Bank's appointees showed an increased proportion of Catholics. The other major British based bank, the Ulster Bank, whose workforce is less Protestant-dominated, (76.6%) appointed 170 people, 81.1% of whom were Protestant.

Table 7.14b - Appointees in large Protestant firms

	Empl-oyment	Appoint-ments	Prot % (empl)	Prot % (appoin)	Diff %
>90% Protestant					
Sunblest bakeries	365	27	96.4	88.5	- 7.9
Henry Bros	353	58	96.3	96.6	0.3
Howden Sirocco	408	11	95.3	63.3	-32.0
Harland and Wolf	2691	549	94.3	95.0	0.7
Ambler	298	95	93.8	93.6	- 0.2
Dale Farm Dairies	472	244	93.7	86.3	- 7.4
N.I.	409	153	93.1	92.6	- 0.5
Ulster Carpet Mills	605	5	92.9	n/a	
Berkshire Hosiery	408	262	92.6	93.1	0.5
Hughes Tools	262	41	92.5	87.2	- 5.3
Campbell Henry	347	35	91.9	n/a	
Bairdwear	589	196	91.2	91.0	- 0.2
CV Carpets	340	4	90.8	n/a	
3M Industrial Tapes	272	13	90.4	n/a	
Ewart Liddell	323	34	90.1	73.5	-16.6
>80% Protestant					
Charles Hurst	453	55	87.9	73.3	-14.6
Short Bros	8647	896	87.6	83.5	- 4.1
Gallaher	1574	24	86.8	70.8	-16.0
Supermac	253	86	86.7	85.7	- 1.0
Lummus Mackie	626	3	86.3	n/a	
Henderson	327	37	85.8	63.9	-21.9
Co-operative	562	14	85.5	n/a	
Securicor	560	156	85.2	74.0	-11.2
Crestacare	529	528	85.0	76.0	- 9.0
Camco	286	17	84.7	64.7	-20.0
Northern Telecom	1813	67	84.3	71.0	-13.3
Barbour Campbell	473	28	84.2	n/a	
Rfd	317	106	84.0	81.4	- 2.6
J Graham	331	37	83.3	80.6	-2.7
Compass Services	965	157	83.0	74.8	- 8.2
F.G. Wilson	590	213	82.5	86.9	4.4
Cantrell & Cochrane	282	137	81.6	87.2	6.4
Dairy Produce Packer	343	74	81.3	73.6	- 7.7
Northern Bank	2275	92	81.1	73.9	- 7.2
O'Kane Poultry	555	218	80.2	80.5	0.3

Source: FEC monitoring returns for 1991

Multi-national Corporations

This section is concerned with firms based outside the United Kingdom and Irish Republic (see Chapter Four). These are referred to below as *multinationals*. The IDB gives details of the ownership of 56 overseas companies, which were included in the 1991 monitoring returns. These companies employed 26,169 people, 13.1% of the monitored private sector workforce. The largest group is US owned, both in terms of number of plants, and employees. The largest firm, Short Brothers is Canadian-owned.

Table 7.15 - Multinational firms by country of origin, 1991

Country	Number	Employment
United States	27	11,419
Germany	7	803
Japan	5	2,019
France	4	1,392
Denmark	3	183
Switzerland	2	233
Canada	1	8,647
Korea	1	426
Belgium	1	372
Luxembourg	1	222
Netherlands	1	219
Portugal	1	149
Finland	1	29
Sweden	1	56
Total	56	26,169

Source: IDB Fact Sheet on Overseas Investment, November 1991; FEC monitoring returns for 1991

The IDB lists a further 11 foreign companies investing in Northern Ireland, which are not yet included in monitoring returns: 5 from the United States; 2 from France; one each from Hong Kong, Canada, Japan and Indonesia. One US firm, the clothing company Fruit of the Loom, which is located in Derry, received the largest IDB grant in 1991 (£12,805,000).

Multinational investment by Industrial Sector

The overwhelming majority (87%) of foreign investment goes into manufacturing, with 98% in SICs 2,3, and 4. It has not become significant in the service sector, although it is an expanding area for transnational investment elsewhere (see eg Enderwick (1989). Banking and finance is dominated by British institutions, and to a lesser extent those from the Irish Republic (see below). The only significant private health care firm, Crestacare, is based in the Isle of Mann. This company has grown rapidly in recent years, in response to government encouragement of private medicine.

Although some of this investment in manufacturing is in new high technology plants (such as BIS Beecom; Daewoo), the majority remains in traditional areas such as motor manufacture and clothing, which have suffered from strong competitive pressures.

Table 7.16 - Private Sector Employment by SIC - Total and Multinational

	Total Employment		Multinational Employment		
	Number	%	Number	% of MNC empl	% of SIC
Agriculture	94	0.05	---		
Energy, water	71	0.04	---		
Minerals chemicals	8,734	4.4	2,765	10.6	31.7
Engineering, vehicles	29,138	14.6	16,809	64.2	57.7
Other manufacturing	54,169	27.2	6,071	23.2	11.2
Construction	11,710	5.9	---		
Distribution	1,315	10.7	61	0.2	0.3
Transport	7,589	3.8	106	0.4	1.4
Banking, Finance	19,254	9.7	288	1.1	1.5
Other Services	26,898	13.5	69	0.3	0.3
Total	199,377	100	26,108	100	13.1

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns; IDB Fact Sheet on Overseas Investment; unpublished data from monitoring returns

Although multinationals' share of the monitored workforce in 1991 was only just over 13%, and roughly 8.5% of the private workforce, it plays a dominant role in manufacturing, employing 57.7% in engineering, and 31.7% in minerals and chemicals. The composition of the workforce in these firms is therefore of considerable importance in itself. In addition, as some of the biggest companies in Northern Ireland, they are in a position to set the pace to some extent among employers, although lack of linkages between these and local firms (see Chapter Four) reduces their influence on the economy as a whole.

Religious Composition

There is no immediately obvious difference in the composition of the workforce between multinational and other private sector firms. Multinationals include 11 companies with less than 10 Catholics, and one with less than 10 Protestants. Of those where the proportion of Protestants is known, it ranges from 12.4% to 92.5%.

The four most Catholic-dominated firms are all Northern Ireland-based, and employ under 250 people. None of the three large Catholic-segregated firms is Northern

Ireland-based. The largest, United Technologies, is a United States subsidiary, and the other two are from the Irish Republic. Only one large company, Adria, employs over 80% Catholics, and is Northern Ireland based. The others employ under 500, of which the largest is the British-owned Sherman; one is German, and the other two are Northern Ireland based.

Table 7.17a - Ownership of large Catholic firms (>250 employees)

>80% Catholic Firm	Employment	Ownership
Adria	1047	NI
Arntz Belting	260	Germany
Sherman, Ben	437	British
Sca packaging	254	NI
City Shirt Co	391	NI
Catholic Segregated firms		
Glen Electric	320	Irish Republic
Sean Quinn	271	Irish Republic
United Technologies	739	U.S.A.

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns; IDB Fact Sheet on Inward Investment: IDB Business Directory

The majority of the most Protestant-dominated large firms are not locally-owned. Of 15 employing more than 90% Protestants, two are US-owned; seven are British; six Northern Ireland-based. Of firms employing over 80% Protestant, four are US-owned; one Canadian; three British; and thirteen Northern Ireland. The largest employer in this group is the locally owned Harland & Wolff, once Northern Ireland's largest private employer, and under British state ownership until the late 1980s. But even though the period of nationalisation coincided with official fair employment policy, there is no discernible impact on its employment composition.

Companies from North America (USA and Canada) account for 31.6% of employment in all firms employing more than 80% Protestants.

Irish-based firms include, as might be expected, some of the most Catholic-dominated firms. Two of the large Catholic-segregated firms, both based in Derry near the border, are owned in the Republic. But they also include some highly Protestant dominated firms; Magee Clothing in Ballymena, employs 220 (90.3% Protestant); Glen Mouldings in Bangor employs 210 (87.8% Protestant). Investment from the Republic is unlikely ever to be significant in terms of the overall composition of employment. But what these figures show is that Irish firms tend to fit in with the prevailing patterns of employment rather than act as a force for change.

Table 7.17b - Ownership of large Protestant firms

>90% Protestant Firm	Employment	Ownership
Sunblest bakeries	365	British
Henry Bros	353	NI
Howden Sirocco	408	British
Harland and Wolf	2691	NI
Ambler	298	British
Dale Farm Dairies	472	British
N.I.Spinners	409	British
Ulster Carpet Mills	605	NI
Berkshire Hosiery	408	British
Hughes Tools	262	United States
Campbell Henry	347	NI
Bairdwear	589	British
CV Carpets	340	British
3M Industrial tapes	272	United States
Ewart Liddell	323	British
>80% Protestant		
Turkington	245	NI
Charles Hurst	453	NI
Short Bros	8647	Canada
Gallaher	1574	United States
Supermac	253	NI
Lummus Mackie	626	United States
Henderson	327	NI
Co-op	562	NI
Securicor	560	British
Crestacare	529	British
Camco	286	United States
Northern Telecom	1813	United States
Barbour Campbell	317	NI
Rfd	317	NI
J Graham	331	NI
Compass Services	965	NI
F.G. Wilson	590	NI
Cantrell & Cochrane	282	NI
Dairy Produce Packer	343	NI
Northern Bank	2275	British
O'Kane Poultry	555	NI

Source: FEC Monitoring returns for 1991; IDB Fact Sheet on Investment in Northern Ireland; Business Directory

Appointees

The sixteen multinational companies employing over 250 made 2,061 appointments in 1991, representing 10.7% of total appointments, rather less than their share of the workforce. Of these 900, (43.7%) were Catholics, slightly above the private sector average. All but two firms showed an increase in the Catholic percentage in their appointments. Of these two firms, the percentage difference in one case was insignificant, and in the other the Protestant proportion increased by 7%, but there were only 33 appointees. The largest increase in the Catholic proportion was 37.2% for

European Components, whose appointments totalled 12% of its workforce. In other firms where the differential was large, the number of appointments was small. Short Brothers made the largest number of appointments: the proportion of Catholics increased, but by a small amount, and the impact on total employment was under half of a percent (see above). The other large number of appointments was in united Technologies. Of its 390 appointments, 4 were Protestants.

North American Companies

The 21 companies owned in the United States make up over a third of all multinational investment. If the Canadian-owned Short Brothers (which has also been subject to MacBride pressure) is included, this share increases to over three quarters. The MacBride campaign would be expected to have made these firms more responsive to changing their employment practices. The evidence so far does not suggest that this has yet brought about a major change in the composition of the workforce. US firms include some of the most highly Protestant-dominated as well as Catholic-dominated companies. North American companies also span the full range of size: the smallest, McDonnell Douglas, employs 29 people, while all the largest multinationals are North American: Short (8.647); Northern Telecom (1813); Gallaher (1574); and du Pont (1558).

Some of these companies gave information on their workforce for a survey conducted in 1988 by the US-based Investor Responsibility Research Center (Booth & Bertsch, 1989). It is possible to examine changes in the period immediately following the 1989 Fair Employment Act.

Table 7.19 - Selected US Companies, composition of employment 1988-91

	1988		1991		Appoint 91	
	Empl	% Prot	Empl	% Prot	No	%Prot
BIS Beecom	100	65.0	137	70.0	--	
du Pont	1,100	33.0	1,558	33.0	102	31.7
Federal Express	106	47.0	106	56.2		
Ford Motor Co	763	58.0	716	58.2	9	44.4
Gallaher	1,470	85.1	1,574	86.8	24	70.8
Hughes Tools	244	92.6	262	92.5	0	----
Lee Apparel	526	50.0	437	45.6	76	34.7
Newtonards	280	91.4				
Derry	246	2.5				
Sherwood Medical	318	78.7	328	77.7	--	---
Sonoco	49	55.0	39	59.0	--	
United Technologies	375	5.0	739	<1.2	390	1.0

Source: Booth & Bertsch (1989); FEC Monitoring Returns for 1991

Gallaher (a subsidiary of American Brands which took the case against MacBride shareholders) closed its Belfast plant in 1988. The workforce at the time of closure was 94.3% Protestant.

None of these companies show any major shift in employment composition over this period. The average trend from 1988 to 1991 was rather to increase the Protestant proportion, although appointees in 1991 included a greater proportion of Catholics. The misleading nature of the average figure however is demonstrated by the composition of the two plants owned by Lee Apparel. The increase in Catholic representation could reflect an expansion of the Catholic plant rather than an increased Catholic representation at the Protestant-dominated plant.

Location

The majority of these companies reflect the prevailing labour force composition in the area where they are located, with Catholic employment predominant in Derry and Newry in the West, and Protestant employment in the North and East. There are two sets of exceptions to this. The first group is firms located in predominantly Protestant areas with a disproportionately Catholic workforce. The greatest imbalance is in the relatively small firm Interface flooring, but it is also evident for Irlandus Circuits, DDL Electronics, and Warner's. The other group is Belfast-based firms in which Catholics are under-represented. There are seven North American firms in Belfast: Hughes Tools is over 90% Protestant; Shorts and Lummus over 80%; and Stockham Valve (employment 123) and McDonnell Douglas (29) employ less than 10 Catholics. Only Federal Express (56.2%) and Ford (58.2%) have a workforce reflecting the Belfast area as a whole.

These figures also reflect the limited contribution of US firms to reducing unemployment. Of United States firms which have located in West Belfast, only two survive. Employment at Ford is declining, while Fisher Body was taken over by a Japanese Company and renamed European Components in 1988. In 1987 the company employed 817 in Dundonald, and 172 in West Belfast. The firm would not disclose its religious composition for the IRRC survey, describing the information as 'confidential' (p105), but claimed it was the same as the surrounding area. European Components now has a composition of 77.6% Protestant, which would imply a heavily Protestant workforce at the Dundonald plant. There is a considerably greater proportion of Catholics in appointees (59.6%).

Table 7.20 - Location of North American Companies

Firm	Location	Empl-oyment	Protestant % (workforce)	(D.C.A)
United Technologies	Derry	739	<10	25.4
Perfecseal	Derry	69	17.6	25.4
Interface Flooring	Craigavon	149	18.6	55.2
Synthetic Industries	Newry	174	23.6	21.6
Irlandus Circuits	Craigavon	295	30.9	55.2
Du Pont	Derry	1,558	33.0	25.4
Kent Plastics	Enniskillen	159	39.0	41.4
DDL Electronics	Craigavon	77	43.5	55.2
Lee Apparel	Newtonards/ Derry	437	45.6	86.6/ 25.4
Warner's	Dromore	515	47.4	68.7
Federal Express	Belfast	106	58.2	54.9
Rusch	Lurgan	258	56.9	53.2
Ford	Belfast	716	58.2	54.9
Sonoco	Craigavon	39	59.0	55.2
Hyster	Craigavon	401	65.5	55.2
BIS Beecom	Antrim	137	70.0	63.3
Invercon	Larne	201	72.7	74.6
Sherwood Medical	Ballymoney	328	77.7	67.0
Marquette	Bangor	76	80.0	89.1
Northern Telecom	Newtownabbey/ Belfast	1,813	84.3	15.5/ 54.9
Camco	Enniskillen	286	84.7	41.4
Lummus Machines	Belfast	626	86.3	54.9
Gallaher	Ballymena	1,574	86.8	79.6
Short Bros	Belfast	8,647	87.6	54.9
3M Industrial Tapes	Bangor	272	90.4	89.1
Hughes Tools	Belfast	262	92.5	94.9
NcDonnell Douglas	Belfast	29	<10 Catholics	54.9
Stockham Valve	Belfast	123	<10 Catholics	54.9

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns for 1991; IDB Fact Sheet on Inward Investment

Ford Motor Company

The US shareholders' campaign scored a major success when Ford adopted a set of employment practices explicitly modelled on the MacBride Principles.

Ford was the first US company to locate in West Belfast, and is the only one still operating there. It is situated in the South West of the city, close to the Catholic Andersonstown area at the end of the Falls Road. The workforce is predominantly male, and nearly half of its employees come from Belfast. It is therefore one of only two large manufacturing firms in Belfast providing employment for Catholic men, the most underrepresented group in manufacturing employment (the other is Short Brothers).

The factory is a typical branch plant. Established in 1964 at the height of the inward investment boom, it is one of the smallest of the company's European production sites, and its workforce has been declining for over a decade. In 1991, some its operations were transferred to the Michigan-based Electrical and Fuel Handling Division, further reducing its independence. (Ford, 1991).

Despite its location, an FEA investigation in the 1980s into engineering employment in Belfast found major imbalances in the workforce. Only 9% of skilled workers were Catholic, and 40% of apprentices (Graham, 1984, p48; FEA, 1983). It was also found guilty of discrimination against Catholic employees in 1983, for allowing Protestants, but not Catholics to take time off for St Patrick's Day (Booth & Bertsch, p64a). In spite of the investigation, the Agency was not able to ensure that the company monitored its workforce (Irish National Caucus, 1990 p6).

It was the MacBride campaign which forced a change of policy. In the face of a shareholders resolution, Ford management agreed in 1987 to carry out a study of the workforce, the first time a major US employer had committed itself to a "systematic evaluation of its employment practices" in Northern Ireland (Booth & Bertsch, p64a).

The study found that although the general workforce represented the proportions in the recruitment area, there was serious underrepresentation in senior management and clerical positions with Catholics holding only 7.7% and 9.1% of posts respectively (Booth & Bertsch, 1989). The former are typically 'Protestant male' jobs, the latter

'Protestant female' jobs. The company considered this "a matter of concern", but stressed that these represented only 3% of the plant's employees (ibid).

Following the study, Ford's adopted fair employment principles which differ in only minor ways from MacBride. Affirmative action has included a training programme, which was extended to the local area in 1988; Ford provided equipment of $150,000 for the local "high tech" training centre, and supports the local Community Workshop. Ford has established an equal opportunities department in its British headquarters with oversight of UK operations, while the Belfast Plant Manger is responsible for equal opportunities at plant level (Ford 1991).

Table 7.21 - Ford (Belfast) Workforce by Grade, 1991,

Job Category	total employment	Catholic employment%	Catholic availability
Senior management	12	25.0	30
Middle management	16	31.3	30
supervision, professional	102	41.2	35
clerical	7	0	40
semi-skilled	462	43.1	40
craft, trainees	98	29.6	25
Total	697	39.2	37

Source: Ford Fair Employment Report, 1991

There have been changes in the composition of the workforce. On the basis of Ford's figures for 'Catholic availability', Catholics are overrepresented in all grades except senior management and clerical, the two grades picked out by the 1987 study. Catholic representation in management has increased, as it has in craft grades, but there are still no Catholics among the small number of clerical grades, while Catholics are over represented in semi-skilled grades, which make up two thirds of the workforce. The Catholic proportion increased in all grades except craft and trainees between 1990 and 1991. This was brought about not by extra recruitment, but by a fall in Protestant employment.

'Catholic availability' is a matter of some dispute, and the company's calculations were criticised by Father Sean McManus of the Irish National Caucus (Booth & Bertsch, p64a). Ford states that it calculates the Plant Recruitment Area on the assumption that all people of working age are available for work, and possess the education and skill levels for at least semi-skilled and clerical work, but it does not explain how the proportions are obtained for individual job categories. It gives details of the residential

areas of its existing workforce, and I assume that the Catholic percentage for different grades has been taken as the proportion in the areas in which the current workforce lives. This is not necessarily a valid method. The recruitment area for senior management for example should encompass the whole of Northern Ireland, and therefore Catholic availability should be more like the proportion of Catholics in the economically active population, 39.8% Catholic (1991 Census). The craft and trainees figure of 25% appears grossly underestimated.

The response of MacBride campaigners to the Ford initiatives has been generally positive. Ford's own *Fair Employment Report* quotes a report in 1990 by the Comptroller of New York state:

> *"As in 1988, Ford Motor Company not only set a standard for the production of detailed information and careful survey answers, it also continued to be in a class by itself in identifying and implementing anti-discrimination programs" (p5).*

The Fair Employment report makes no reference to gender composition, and equal opportunities for women is clearly not given as high a priority within the Belfast plant. Analysis of the gender composition is given in a separate *Equal Opportunities Report* (Ford, 1992), concerned with the UK operation as a whole (which the company refers to as *Ford of Britain*). The report contains data on gender and ethnic minority composition; no data on the latter is given for the Belfast plant. It does not specify the religion of employees, but by combining the two it is possible to identify patterns.

Table 7.22 - Gender composition of Ford Belfast Plant, March 1992

	Total	(% of workforce)	female	(%)
Salaried staff	140	19.8	13	9.3
Hourly paid staff	566	80.2	15	2.6
Total	706	100	28	4.0

Source: Ford Equal Opportunities Report, pp3-4

The plant is overwhelmingly male, with women only 4% of employees. This compares with a female percentage of 5.4% for the workforce of 'Ford Britain' as a whole, and 11.0% for salaried staff. No other information is given specifically for the Belfast plant, but the general information shows that women on salaried grades in the company as a whole are concentrated at the lower levels. They represent over 80% of employees

on salary grades 2,3 and 4; by grade 5, the proportion of women has dropped to 44.1%, and at 6 to 7.3%; the proportion of women declines further as salary scale increases, with none in the top two grades. A similar pattern is evident among hourly paid staff, with women making up only 5.8% of technical trainees.

One can therefore assume that the small number of Catholics in top management are all male, while virtually all the manual workers are men. The nine Protestant clerical workers are likely to come from the 13 female salaried staff. Clearly the priority of increasing Catholic employment has been interpreted as Catholic male employment.

The continuing decline of the Belfast operation undermines the potential benefits of fair employment practices. As the 1991 monitoring report shows, Ford's religious composition has not changed much in recent years, and the number of employees taken on is very small. Only nine new appointments were recorded by FEC monitoring, and the company recruited 17 technical trainees in 1991.

The company's 1991 Fair Employment report states that there will be a "limited number of promotions" from time to time, but the run-down of the workforce means these will be restricted. Although its training programme has been accelerated in recent years in line with company reorganisation, there has been a cut in its sponsorship programme (p10). The recent recession in the car industry has forced Ford to move towards short time working in several of its British plants, and poses a threat to the Belfast plant. Clearly Ford can not be relied upon to provide increased employment in Belfast in the foreseeable future, let alone to open up new opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Short Brothers (Shorts)

Short Brothers was privatised in 1989, becoming part of the Canadian Bombardier Group. Unlike Ford, Shorts begun as an indigenous Northern Ireland company, and was one of the key private sector employers in the dominant engineering industry for most of this century. It is not a peripheral plant, but continues to be involved in both the design and manufacture of aerospace products (Shorts, 1991).

It has also been known as one of the most sectarian of employers, both when in private hands, and under state ownership. The present Canadian management is attempting to

transform that image. The company is located in the docks area in the East of the city, "regarded by West Belfast Catholics almost as non-go areas" (FEA, 1983, p10). It was not just travelling to the company that was problematic, especially for people without cars. There has been a long history of intimidation inside the plant, and a pervasive culture of sectarian displays (see eg Rolston & Tomlinson, p65).

The weakness of the British government's commitment to fair employment is nowhere more graphically illustrated than in its failure to develop effective equal opportunities programmes in the two largest and most sectarian of employers when in public ownership. Shorts, like Ford, was subject to the FEA investigation into engineering employment in the Belfast area. In a progress report, the FEA found that the Catholic proportion of skilled men was between 3 and 8%, and only 6% of apprentices came from Catholic schools (FEA, 1985, p1). The Catholic proportion in the workforce as a whole was also estimated at 3-8% (ibid p13). The company agreed to an Affirmative Action programme to increase Catholic representation (ibid, appendix I), and there were a series of monitoring exercises conducted by the Agency over the next two years.

As a result the Catholic promotion of apprentices rose significantly, reaching 24% in 1984. The Catholic proportion of adult appointees however, while rising initially to 26.6%, fell back in the latter part of 1984 to only 14%. Catholic applications on the other hand had risen to 26.6%. Although the company blamed the low Catholic success rate on

> *"a lack of appropriate skills, in which the Company include work experience, in the Catholic community" (ibid, p7).*

The Agency found that Catholics did better in skilled areas, where lack of skills and experience might be expected to count against them, and worst in areas where no specific skills were required. The FEA concluded that recruitment procedures were seriously flawed, and the criteria for selecting candidates "extremely subjective". Although the Affirmative Action programme agreed in 1983 included a commitment to advertise all vacancies publicly, this was not done until 1986. Following the third monitoring report, the Agency made stated that if disparities continued which could not be satisfactorily explained, it

> *"would be obliged... to review the Company's right to hold an Equal Opportunity Certificate" (ibid p13).*

It was pressure from the United States, when the company was competing for a US government defence contract, which forced management to take fair employment more seriously. When the company was awarded the contract, it announced that it would open a new factory in West Belfast. The company has now established new sites at Dunmurry and Newtonards as part of its affirmative action programme.

The new management of Bombardier has shown rather more commitment to fair employment at Shorts than the British state. An Equal Opportunities manager was appointed in October 1991 at senior management level, who reports regularly to the senior management team. He described fair employment as being 'fast tracked' by the company due to the political importance of religion in Northern Ireland.[5] A former employee of the FEA/FEC, he argues that the voluntary nature of the 1976 Act made it ineffective and that US pressure was crucial in securing legislative change.

Equal opportunities in Bombardier is very much tied to the vocabulary of the enterprise culture. In the words of the company's extremely glossy brochure

> *"we have the backing of a well-motivated, highly skilled workforce whose talents in every field are today being nurtured and put to full used by creative training and management, by he introduction of state-of-the-art equipment, and by the application of a total quality concept in every facet of our operation" (Shorts, 1991, p9)*

The programme is very much a top-down policy. As with Ford (and other companies which have moved on equal opportunities ahead of British legislation) external pressure has precipitated action. The "attitude is right at the top", and the company is now running an 'awareness programme' to spread the message to all its employees.

The company places great emphasis on training, and employee assessment, based on 'objective criteria' of performance. The old 'last in, first out' methods of determining who should go under redundancy schemes - which inevitably involved an anti-Catholic bias - have gone. When the company made 200 people redundant over the past year, this was done on the basis of an 'Annual Performance Assessment'.

An interesting aspect of developments at Shorts is the way in which the equal opportunities policy has been tied to restructuring of the production process, which is particularly associated with the new factories. A programme of refurbishment in the four years up to 1993 cost £200 million. Modernisation has "facilitated a change of attitudes and working practices, with less demarcation of jobs". As well as less

sectarian displays, there are "very few girlie pictures" in the new plant. Management has taken on the display of sectarian symbols, which has "not been a problem" since 1987. But while the most overt symbols are no longer displayed, 'personalised tool boxes'[6] continue to demonstrate identification with the dominant culture.

This is tied to concrete changes which potentially undermine the old structures of working practices, and have implications not merely for the sectarian composition, but for gender as well. The traditional perception of engineering is male, requiring brute strength and getting ones hands dirty, with the "oily rag" as an essential item. The machinery which has been replaced was often 40 to 50 years old, and relied on traditional 'labour aristocracy' skills. The new production processes place less premium on force. The increased use of computer-aided design and assembly takes away much of the heavy work, while the new composites which are replacing the heavy metals in machine parts are easier to work with.

Schools liaison is a significant part of the affirmative action programme. The company has developed its own education package which is currently being used in six schools. It has a schools work experience programme, with 68 students in 1992 from a mixed group of schools. This is motivated not merely by fair employment considerations, but the practical problem of recruitment and retention, since in the new types of skills these changes require, the firm competes with Britain for employees.

The workforce has always been predominantly male; exclusionary practices have kept out women as well as Catholics from the 'labour aristocracy' jobs. About 13% of the workforce is now female, concentrated mainly in administration and clerical occupations, although there are some in information technology and a small number of female apprenticeships. There is one woman director. This represents an increase from the early 1980s when there were only about 3% female, and 1987 when it had increased to 9%. Changes in technology are likely to open up new jobs for women, while skill shortages may also force the company to take measures to recruit and retain women.

Women have more problems in travelling to the plant than men, since they tend to have less access to cars, while caring responsibilities shorten the travel to work distance for many. The plant is at some distance from housing, and difficult to get to on foot. This particularly affects Catholic women, who are reluctant to make the journey through

Protestant-dominated areas of East Belfast. Catholics are less well represented in the female workforce than the male.

Religion has been prioritised, and gender equality is not seen as politically urgent. The company brochure gives no indication that it has recognised the importance of promoting women in its workforce. Employees are pictured in various departments to display the new technology: well over a hundred are identifiably male, while only four are women.

The equal opportunities manager is keen to pursue gender equality, and has been working with the EOCNI to develop new working practices. He would like to see a 'menu' of flexible work practices to enable staff to combine work with caring responsibilities. He argues that fair employment policies in recruitment and training will also benefit women. The company's sex equality policy is however "still at the talking stage", although a childcare project is being developed, with a feasibility study in preparation and a sexual harassment policy has been drafted.

In 1988, the company assured the US government that Catholics would be a third of the company's recruits by 1990 (Belfast Telegraph, 1/6/88, cited in Rolston & Tomlinson, p64). This manifestly has not happened. Although Catholic recruits to the workforce approached 17% in 1984, the improvement has not been maintained. The 1991 monitoring returns showed a workforce still 87.6% Protestant. Between privatisation, and April 1992, the company took on 1,000 new employees. Of these 856 appointments were monitored for 1991, and the Protestant proportion was 83.5%, still almost the same figure as in 1984. This hardly makes any difference to the overall composition of employment (less than 0.4%), let alone reaching the promised 30% Catholic proportion. The affirmative action programme contains no specific goals or targets. The impact of the company's new more developed fair employment practices had not worked their way through by 1991, and the equal opportunities manager was not in place.

The size of the total workforce means that the company can claim that it is one of the largest private employer of Catholics. With 1044 Catholic employees in 1991, only two companies (British Telecom and Desmond and Sons) employed more Catholics. But so far the company does not seem to have been able to break the barrier of less than 80% Protestant employment.

The company intends to expand its workforce after a period of cut back lasting a year to eighteen months. An upturn is expected, since there remains apparently a "healthy demand for short-range missiles". Competitive pressures which have forced restructuring of the production process and working practices may have an impact. Clearly the firm is in a stronger position than Ford Belfast, which is a peripheral plant within the company structure.

As always in Northern Ireland, religion remains a deeply sensitive issue. The equal opportunities manager stated that the catchment area for the plant's workforce is now fairly wide, and includes West Belfast. But he argues that "you cannot shout too much about success" till people have got used to new ways. In other words, the fear of provoking a sectarian backlash remains a constant element.

Financial Services

Financial services has been one of the fastest growing sectors in Northern Ireland, although the growth is substantially less than in Britain. All the major employers are British or Irish-owned institutions, which has restricted the Northern Ireland operations to branch plants with limited functions. Finance has traditionally been a Protestant area, and FEA investigations of all three major sectors (banking, insurance and building societies) 1980s revealed significant imbalances in the workforce (FEC, 1986a; 1986b;1986c). Ownership here is crucial in determining employment patterns: the British banks for example are Protestant dominated, while the Irish banks have an overrepresentation of Catholics. But different patterns of employment are related to the communities each serve, particularly in personal finance.

Finance (SICS 81 and 82) employs 11,082 people in monitored firms (7,427 in banks; 784 in building societies; 2,871 in insurance). The majority of employment, and all the substantial firms are British or Irish Republic based. The Trustee Savings Bank of Northern Ireland operates autonomously of the British operation. Just over half the employment in banking is in two of the major British clearing banks, Ulster Bank (a subsidiary of National Westminster); and Northern Bank (Midland). Another 16% is in the two major Irish banks, Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank. Insurance is less concentrated, but only one of the 13 firms employing over 100 people is Northern Ireland based. The Prudential employs 22.9% in this sector.

Table 7.23 - Religious composition of Employment in Financial Sector, 1991 (% of employment in each sector)

	Banks	Building Societies	Insurance
<10 Catholic	3.5	4.1	8.7
>80% Protestant	36.8	51.9	32.8
>75% Protestant	34.9	--	28.3
Sub-Total	75.2	56.0	69.8
<50% Protestant	19.0	0	9.7

Source: FEC monitoring returns for 1991; unpublished data from monitoring returns

Over three quarters of employees in banking are in firms with a substantial underrepresentation of Catholics, and 19% in firms where Protestants are underrepresented (the Irish-owned banks). The figures are smaller for the other two sectors, but substantially over half.

No information on gender is given in the 1991 monitoring report, but FEC investigations in the 1980s give some idea of gender composition. These are now some years old, and the proportion of women employed has increased, but they suggest patterns which are likely to have persisted.

Banking

Banking is highly unionised in Northern Ireland, with average salaries 50% above British levels (NIEC, 1992c, p 64). It is therefore a highly desirable occupation for school leavers with qualifications. The FEA'S investigation allows a comparison with the situation before the 1989 Fair Employment Act.

Table 7.24 - Religious composition of employment in 5 major banks, 1986-1991 (%)

	1986		1991		Appointees 1991	
	P	C	P	C	P	C
Allied Irish	28	72	31.7	68.3	48.7	51.3
Bank of Ireland	42	58	47.7	52.3	49.0	51.0
Northern	84	16	81.1	18.9	73.9	26.1
Ulster	77	23	76.6	23.4	81.1	18.9
TSB	80	20	79.6	20.4	71.4	28.6

Source: FEC, 1986a; Monitoring Returns for 1991

Both Irish-owned banks have increased their Protestant proportion, and this is maintained in their appointments during 1991. The Bank of Ireland made 147 appointments (nearly a quarter of total staff) with a substantially higher Protestant representation than in 1986. The British banks reduced their underrepresentation of Catholics, though in the case of the Ulster and the TSB this was marginal. The Ulster Bank made the largest number of appointments in 1991 (170) and these actually show a deterioration. In general it appears as if the Irish-owned banks have been rather more successful in moving towards a balanced workforce than the British. Total employment has increased over the period, with Protestant employment growing slightly faster than Catholic.

The FEA report showed that of staff in 1986, there was a higher proportion of Protestants among those in post before 1970 (TSB was not included in this exercise). This applied both to the Catholic and Protestant-dominated banks. But while the Catholic proportion increased significantly among those recruited between 1970 and 1976, there was a reversal after 1976, following the first Fair Employment Act. Of 774 people appointed to the Northern Bank after 1976, 87% were Protestant, while for the Bank of Ireland, the Protestant proportion increased to 46%, only 2% less than the pre-1970 proportion. Overall the recruitment of Catholics to the banks in the period of expansion 1970-76 was 35%, roughly in line with their proportion in the population, but this fell back to 31% after 1976. The FEC concludes that

> *"there must have been a failure to afford equality of opportunity on the grounds of religion especially prior to 1970 ... the shift of recruitment patterns demonstrates that bank managements have intended in recent years although with varying success to afford equality of opportunity"(pp14-15).*

One of the most striking results of the report is the different gender composition of Protestants and Catholics. Catholic males were most underrepresented overall, with very low employment in Protestant-dominated British-based banks. Underrepresentation

of Catholics is higher where the male proportion of employment is highest (TSB and Northern).

Table 7.25 - Employment in principal banks by sex and religion, 1986 (%)

	Males			Females		
	P	C	Total	P	C	Total
Allied Irish	32	68	43	25	75	57
Bank of Ireland	46	54	46	39	61	54
Northern	88	12	53	79	21	47
Ulster	84	16	36	72	28	64
TSB	88	12	46	73	27	54
Total	78	22	46	66	34	54

Source: FEC, 1986a, p4

In each case Catholic men are less well represented than Catholic women. The proportion of female employment increased during the 1980s as electronic data processing, which has been predominantly female, replaced other posts. In March 1991, 62% of banking employment was female, compared to 55% in 1983 (NIEC 1992c, p63). This is likely to have increased the underrepresentation of Catholic men.

Senior Staff

A more complex picture emerges in relation to senior staff. Clear patterns of both gender and religious disadvantage are evident in the figures for managers: Catholic men were less likely than Protestants to be managers even in Catholic-dominated banks in which they were the majority of employees. The proportion of female managers was tiny, particularly among Catholics. The picture for assistant managers is less clear in terms of religion, but there is still a huge, though smaller, gender divide. Catholic women do slightly better than Protestant women, while Catholic men do proportionately better in the Bank of Ireland, and worse in Allied Irish, and the gap is closer in the Protestant-dominated banks.

The expansion of incomes in the 1980s led to an increased demand for financial services, in both communities. The pattern of growth tended to maintain religious segregation. The FEA investigators

> *"gained the impression that the religion of staff, particularly of senior staff, had been considered relative to the type of business being generated in particular branches and that this affected the distribution of Protestant and Roman Catholics in senior positions" (p5)*

Table 7.26 - Proportion of staff in each group in senior positions, 1986

Managers

	Protestant			Catholic		
	male	female	total	male	female	total
Allied Irish	25	1	13	20	0.4	9
Bank of Ireland	29	-	14	25	--	11
Northern	22	1	12	14	0.4	6
Ulster	28	-	11	10	-	3
TSB			16			5

Assistant Managers

	Protestant			Catholic		
	male	female	total	male	female	total
Allied Irish	30	1	15	20	5	11
Bank of Ireland	22	6	14	31	6	17
Northern	20	2	12	19	4	10
Ulster	26	4	12	25	4	9
TSB			13			15

Note: Figures for TSB were not broken down by gender

Source: FEC, 1986a, p6

Banks in Northern Ireland have traditionally operated a ban, in cooperation with the Union, on recruitment of people over the age of 21 to permanent contracts. This has been particularly problematic for women who may leave the labour market for family reasons, and are unable subsequently to obtain permanent employment. They have been given temporary contracts, which deny them promotion.

The Ulster Bank withdrew the bar in the face of a proposed formal investigation by the EOCNI (EOCNI, 1991, p10), and has since established an equal opportunities with a full time equal opportunities manager.[7] The policy is "at the education stage", and she sells it within the bank on the basis that it makes "business sense". The equal opportunities manager was reluctant to give a gender breakdown of the workforce, but suggested that women were progressing through to management posts.

Unlike other equal opportunities officers I spoke to, she argued that "religion is not an issue to the same degree as gender". The bank is "not unhappy with our figures on religion", and "people looking for a career in banking apply to all the banks irrespective of religion". But different patterns of employment clearly persist. The Ulster Bank itself had the highest proportion of Protestants among appointees in 1991, although its overall employment (76.6% Protestant) is less unrepresentative than the TSB or the Northern.

The defensiveness over religion may have been because the officer herself felt more comfortable with the gender issue. On the other hand, it could reflect a lack of pressure from senior management in Britain, which has not faced the same kind of campaign as MacBride.[8] The equal opportunities post itself was established in response to an EOCNI initiative, not from pressure from the FEA, although the Agency had criticised the bank's practices. Once again the two issues are being kept determinedly separate.

Building Societies

Building societies grew in importance in the 1980s with the increase in house purchase. Nine societies were investigated by the FEA (FEC, 1986b); eight British-based and one local. All except the Leicester and Anglia had an underrepresentation of Catholics in the workforce as a whole; there were substantial numbers of all-Protestant branches, but only the Anglia and Leicester had any all-Catholic branches. The companies explained the low employment of Catholics by the concentration of branches in the East, but the Belfast headquarters staff showed similar underrepresentation, with the Leicester the only exception. Catholic representation was very low among senior staff, with only 9% of branch managers Catholic. No regional manager was a Catholic. No information was given about the gender breakdown of the workforce.

As in the other financial sectors, the proportion of Catholics increased during the 1970s. But the FEA concluded that no society except Anglia and the Leicester afforded equality of opportunity. It made a series of recommendations to improve selection procedures.

Table 7.27 - Religious composition of the workforce, 9 building societies, 1984-1991

	1984 empl	Prot %	1991 empl	Prot %
Progressive	47	95.5	78	81.3
Leeds	37	91.7	32	<10 Catholics
Halifax	172	90.3	242	81.5
Gateway	38	88.9	---	
Abbey National	156	84.5	211	74.3
Nationwide	92	83.7	--	
Woolwich	42	83.3	87	83.5
Leicester	81	54.3	---	
Anglia	26	53.8	---	
Nationwide Anglia			121	68.0

Note: figures are for Protestant % of those who declared a religion. For Leeds, 11 staff from Northern Ireland not thought by the FEA to be Catholic are included as Protestant in the 1984 figures.
Source FEC. 1986b; FEC Monitoring Returns for 1991

There have been considerable changes since 1984, with two societies closed, and two merged. Comparable figures are available for only five. Three show a considerable expansion in Catholic proportion, in all of which the workforce has increased substantially. One has a marginally increased Protestant proportion, while the fifth, the Leeds, employs less than 10 Catholics. The Nationwide Anglia has a Protestant proportion of 68.0% which reflects the proportions of the two previous societies. This sector therefore shows considerable increase in Catholic staff as employment has expanded, but there is still a preponderance of Protestants, with only two of the five for which a percentage is available employing more than 20% Catholics.

Insurance

The FEA's investigation into eight insurance companies found substantial imbalances in employment (FEC, 1986c). The picture is complicated by the fact that insurance business tends to divide into two groups: 'industrial life' is concerned mainly with individual life insurance, with agents making regular calls on clients to collect premiums; 'ordinary business' involves larger clients, and business is conducted mainly from the company office.

Residential segregation determines that the religious composition of industrial life staff is directly related to the areas covered, and

> *"a person known to the company, from the area already being worked by an agent, was quite likely to be recruited ... the tendency would be for Roman Catholics to cover certain areas and Protestants certain areas. This in turn would be self perpetuating" (FEC, 1986c, p6)*

Office staff on the other hand were predominantly Protestant, as were the staff of firms engaged primarily in ordinary business. Of the eight firms investigated, five were industrial life (three with British headquarters) and three (all British) ordinary business. The FEA took the population of Northern Ireland as a whole as the relevant comparison, since these firms operate several branches throughout Northern Ireland, with headquarters in Belfast. On the basis of a Protestant share of the economically active population of 60.2% (1991 Census) Catholics were overrepresented in three companies (Britannic, Refuge and United Friendly), and significantly underrepresented in four (the

three ordinary business, and Prudential). Pearl came closest to reflecting the Northern Ireland population.

Table 7.28 - Religious Composition of 8 insurance companies, 1986-1991

	1986 Empl	% Prot	1991 Empl	% Prot
Ordinary Business				
Commercial Union	100	89.0	155	85.1
General Accident	134	88.8	142	85.7
Royal	113	86.7	108	79.8
Industrial Life				
Britannic	52	50.0	50	44.9
Pearl	189	66.7	181	67.2
Prudential	516	77.7	568	76.8
Refuge	66	34.9	70	35.7
United Friendly	138	42.8	130	41.6
Total	1308	72.0	1404	71.2

Source: FEC, 1986c, p3: FEC, Monitoring Returns for 1991

The FEA concluded that Catholics were able to obtain agents' posts easily, but access to more specialist activities was restricted, and

> *"companies pay little attention to the promotion of equality of opportunity and, except in the case of Pearl Assurance PLC, the statistics show that in practice none of the companies investigated, positively provides equality of opportunity" (p19).*

The FEA recommended improvements in recruitment procedures, and there have been slight changes in the composition of employment. The proportion of Protestants in companies specialising in ordinary business has been reduced, though it still averages well over 80%. The Prudential, the largest company, has changed its ratio by less than 1%. Although the companies as a whole have increased employment by nearly 100 (over 7%) the average Protestant ratio for the eight companies has changed by only 0.8%. Only the Prudential was required to submit information on appointments. It made 39 during 1991, of which 71.8% were Protestant, a significantly lower proportion than in its workforce.

Little information was given on the gender breakdown of employment. Women dominated secretarial and clerical posts (and presumably, thought it is not stated, the majority of agents were men). Catholic representation was not obviously tied to sex. There has been a shift in the gender composition of insurance, as an 8% decline in male-dominated policy presentation and serving work (due to computerisation), has

coincided with a 13.1% increase in female-dominated data processing (NIEC, 1992c, p6). This does not appear to have been accompanied by any major shift in religious composition.

Conclusion

The religious and gender composition of the private sector has changed since Direct Rule, with a reduction in some of the more extreme imbalances. But this appears to be more a result of developments in the economy as a whole than of legislative changes. Catholics remain underrepresented in the workforce as a whole, and there are continuing patterns of specialisation by religion and gender. Even using the global figures for individual firms, it is apparent that very large proportion of the workforce work mainly with people of their own religion and sex.

It seems clear that there is nothing specific to multinational corporations which tends to undermine sectarianism. It was political pressure from shareholders which forced a change in strategy. Although the new policies at Shorts coincide with private ownership by a Canadian company, it was the political importance of religion, and the previous campaign over contract compliance, which made sectarianism an issue for the company.

Multinationals have tended to reflect the prevailing employment practices, with predominantly Catholic employment in Catholic areas. But in Belfast, there has been an imbalance: Ford, located in Catholic West Belfast has a workforce which reflects the population of Belfast as a whole, while US firms located in East Belfast have had almost exclusively Protestant workforces. The composition of skilled and management posts has also shown underrepresentation of Catholics, regardless of location.

British firms show similar patterns of employment to those of local firms. Their distance from Northern Ireland's sectarian structures has not ensured that British subsidiaries operate non-sectarian employment practices. This reflects partly local management of these firms. But it is also a result of the lack of pressure from either the state or campaigns comparable to MacBride. British control of the major financial companies has accompanied Protestant domination of this sector.

The first Fair Employment legislation had little effect. The increase in Catholic employment, for example in the financial sector, came about before the Act. It was a response to a general sectoral shift, and the expansion of Catholic income, largely through employment in the state sector, which generated a market for personal financial services. The expansion in Catholic employment now appears to have stabilised. The tendency for each community to serve its own needs is being replicated in the financial sector.

It is too early to make any very definite judgements on the impact of the later legislation, but the study of individual firms suggests that the impact has been uneven, and change has been extremely small. Although it has been argued that labour turnover is too low to allow significant change in any one year (Gudgin & Murphy, 1991), the record of those companies which have made substantial numbers of appointments has not on the whole been encouraging.

The discussion has had to ignore employment in small companies since no data is available through monitoring returns. These are the companies in which the greatest segregation is likely. The monitoring returns have demonstrated the persistence of sectarian imbalances in larger companies. The eradication of these in small companies which are embedded in local communities through family and community networks (McLaughlin & Ingram, 1991) is even more fraught with problems.

Notes to Chapter Seven

1. Obair (1991) *US Investment in the North of Ireland*, Briefing Paper 5, page 1

2. The Monitoring Report lists returns for 1708 individual firms, but mistakenly refers to only 1707.

3. The FEC claim a very low rate of non-compliance with monitoring

4. Obair, op cit, p3

5. The information in the rest of this section, unless otherwise stated, was obtained from an interview with Short's equal opportunities manager, April 1992.

6. 'Personalised tool boxes' is a euphemism for the display of sectarian emblems on equipment, lockers, etc.

7. The quotations in the rest of this section come from a conversation with the equal opportunities manager of the Ulster Bank.

8. The 'Equality Group' has initiated a campaign to boycott the Northern Bank, and would like to see it extended to Britain, but it has not received much support, and the campaign is unlikely to put serious pressure on the bank.

Public Sector Employment

Introduction

This chapter examines patterns of religious and gender inequality in the public sector. Public sector employment has expanded rapidly since the 1970s, and the direct rule administration has taken most areas of public expenditure out of local control. The size and structure of public employment is therefore subject directly to British government policy. The chapter begins with an overview of public sector employment as a whole, and then focuses on the health service. The second part examines employment at the Royal Victoria Hospital (the Royal).

A hospital was chosen for more detailed study because, unlike many public services, hospitals have a religiously mixed workforce, and serve mixed communities. As major employers of men and women from both communities, they offer the opportunity to examine patterns of religious and gender subordination.

The Royal itself is interesting for a number of reasons. Situated in West Belfast, it is the major local employer and provider of health care. The area has lost most of its large scale private employment, particularly manufacturing, and has the highest unemployment in Northern Ireland. Poverty and social deprivation are also high, with obvious implications for health. The area is therefore doubly dependent on the hospital, and the recent cuts in employment and services have had a major impact on the local community.

The Royal has sprung to prominence on a number of occasions through industrial disputes on both national and local issues. The hospital has a history of trade union militancy, and resistance to cuts in jobs and conditions of work. Inevitably these disputes have had religious and gender dimensions, although this is often implicit rather than explicit. The longest running Equal Value case in Northern Ireland involves five of

the hospital's cleaning staff. This case has raised issues about the value of traditional 'women's work' and has had a wider resonance in the local community.

The hospital is at the centre of conflicting government policies. On the one hand cuts in funding and privatisation have led to job losses and service cuts which have had a disproportionate effect on the most disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, legislation on equal opportunities and fair employment has led to the establishment of an equal opportunities unit within the regional Health and Social Services Board, the Eastern Board, with the avowed aim of improving the representation of Catholics and women within the workforce.

The first part of this chapter is based on the 1991 Fair Employment monitoring returns, and the Eastern Board's own equal opportunities monitoring. As in Chapter Seven, in the tables below, where the information comes from the FEC's own analysis of the monitoring returns, the source given is 'Summary of Monitoring Returns' with the appropriate page number. Where they were constructed from the individual authorities monitoring returns, the source is given as 'FEC monitoring returns for 1991'. In general, figures for religious composition are given in () brackets where they refer to the percentage of the total workforce; and in [] brackets where they refer to percentages of the total whose religion was determined (excluding the category 'non determined'). The second part is based largely on published and unpublished material supplied by the Eastern Health Board, the Royal Hospital management, and health service trade unions. It is supplemented by a small number of interviews.

Public Sector Employment in 1991

The FEC received monitoring information for 1991 from 97 authorities employing 153,414 people, of which 35.6% were Catholic.[1] Individual returns are listed for the 80 authorities which employed more than 25 people (2 civil service departments; 26 district councils; 5 education and library boards; 4 health and social services boards; and 43 'others'). Together they employed 152,985 people. The report gives an analysis by sex and occupation for the former group, but since the religious composition of the workforce is the same when the small authorities are excluded, it is safe to assume (as with the private sector) that the patterns revealed in the general analysis are replicated for those for which individual information is available.

Table 8.1 - Religious composition of monitored workforce, 1991

	Protestant	Catholic	Non-Determined	Total
Male	50,703 (64.6) [69.4]	22,365 (28.5) [30.6]	5,371 (6.8)	78,439 (51.1)
Female	40,886 (54.5) [59.1]	28,282 (37.7) [40.9]	5,807 (7.7)	74,975 (48.9)
Total	91,589 (59.7) [64.4]	50,647 (33.0) [35.6]	11,178 (7.3)	153,414 (100)

Note: figures in () brackets are percentages of total. Figures in [] brackets are percentages of total whose religion was determined.

Source: FEC Summary of 1991 Monitoring Returns, p14

Catholics are underrepresented in the public sector workforce as a whole, but this results from male underrepresentation. Catholic women are employed in more or less equal proportions to their participation in the labour force. There has been an increase in the Catholic proportion since 1990 of 0.2% for males, and 0.5% for females (FEC 1992, p 13).

There is a slightly higher proportion of Catholics than in the monitored private sector workforce, as a result of the high participation of Catholic women. Women account for 55.8% of the Catholic workforce in the public sector, but only 44.6% of the Protestant workforce. The corresponding figures for the private sector are 45.3% for Catholics and 41.2% for Protestants. Although Catholic women are overrepresented relative to Protestant women in both sectors, the difference is much greater in the public sector.

The major source of male underrepresentation of Catholics appears to be their virtual absence from the security forces. when this group is excluded, the underrepresentation of Catholic males falls dramatically. Their share of the public sector workforce increased to 37.4% (FEC, 1992, p 20) just over 2% less than their share in the active population (1991 Census). The FEC's figures show that over 15,000 Protestant males are in security related occupations, or just over 30% of the Protestant male public sector workforce. By contrast, there were 1,157 Catholic men in these occupations, 5.2% of the Catholic male public sector workforce.

Occupation

There are clear specialisations in occupational group by gender and religion, but religious differences are greater among men. Women's employment is more concentrated than men's. More than half (56.9%) is in two SOCs, associated professional and technical, and clerical; over three quarters in three; and over 88% in four. By contrast, personal and protective services employs 27.9% of men, but only one other SOC, 'other occupations' employs more than 15%. Women are less well represented among high status occupations (SOCs 1 and 2), but are much more numerous among SOC3.

The most numerous male occupation, personal and protective services, shows the greatest divergence between Protestant and Catholics; it employs over a third of Protestant men, but only just over 15% of Catholics. The difference is due to the security services, which accounts for the majority of male employment in this group, and 13.6% of total public sector employment, and whose religious composition is 92.6% Protestant.

Catholic men are substantially overrepresented in 3, 4 and 9. Their high numbers in 'associated professional' contrasts with their low representation in this group in the private sector. This group includes the 'caring professions' of nursing and education which are 'Catholic' as well as 'female' occupations; nursing is a specifically 'Catholic male' occupation. A similar difference exists for SOC4 (clerical, which is a distinctly 'Protestant' occupation in the private sector. SOC9 on the other hand shows similar Catholic overrepresentation in both. Catholic male employment in the higher status occupations (SOCs 1 and 2) is proportionate to their participation in the public sector as a whole.

Table 8.2 - Public Sector Employment by Occupation

	Male		Female		Total	
	P	C	P	C	male	female
SOC1: Managers, administrators	70.5 [10.8]	29.5 [10.2]	65.0 [6.0]	35.0 [4.7]	8,239	3,951
SOC2: Professional occupations	70.4 [7.7]	29.6 [7.3]	58.4 [4.5]	41.6 [4.6]	6,399	3,683
SOC3: Associate professional & tech	61.7 [10.5]	38.3 [14.8]	53.5 [22.5]	46.5 [28.2]	9,219	19,331
SOC4: Clerical & secretarial	55.0 [6.6]	45.0 [12.2]	61.3 [33.4]	38.7 [30.5]	6,421	23,311
SOC5: Craft, skilled manual	71.0 [10.0]	29.0 [9.2]	71.2 [0.5]	28.8 [0.3]	7,510	294
SOC6: Personal, Protective	83.2 [33.7]	16.8 [15.4]	60.1 [19.0]	39.9 [18.3]	21,908	14,066
SOC7: Sales	74.1 [0.2]	25.9 [0.2]	73.0 [0.6]	27.0 [0.3]	140	354
SOC8: Plant & Machine operatives	63.4 [7.4]	36.6 [9.7]	76.0 [0.2]	24.0 [0.8]	6,194	112
SOC9: Other	58.8 [13.2]	41.2 [20.9]	59.6 [13.3]	40.4 [13.0]	12,409	9,873

Note: The first set of figures are for Protestant or Catholic as a percentage of those for whom a religion was determined. Figures in [] brackets are for the proportion of each group in that occupation.

Source: FEC, Summary of 1991 monitoring returns, pp 18-19

There is less religious difference in the occupational distribution of female employment, although Catholic women are relatively underrepresented among managers (SOC1) and overrepresented in associate professional (SOC3), both in contrast to the private sector. Their underrepresentation in clerical occupations is much less than in the private sector.

The figures suggest that Catholic women have greater access than Catholic mens to public employment, but in high status occupations it is gender rather than religion which is the most serious barrier, and here Catholic men do relatively better than Catholic women.

Religious Segregation

The extent of religious segregation is less than in the private sector, based on the figures for total employment in public authorities. But primary and secondary teaching, which is almost entirely segregated, is excluded from the FEC figures. This group

employs approximately 38,000 people[2] or nearly 25% of the monitored public sector workforce. Of the 80 authorities whose individual workforce composition is given, seven employ less than ten Catholics, but only one of these, Carrickfergus Borough Council, employs more than 100. No authority employs less than ten Protestants, and only one has a workforce with less than 30% Protestants (Newry and Mourne District Council which is 90.5% Catholic). Six have less than 40% Protestants, and eight less than 50%. At the other end of the scale seven are more than 90% Protestant, and 12 over 80%.

Over a quarter of the public sector workforce is in sectors with less than 25% Catholics, including over 10% in which Catholics make up less than 10%. Only a tiny proportion (0.2%) are in a workforce in which Protestants are less than 10%, but 13.7% are in authorities where Protestants are in a minority, which means substantial underrepresentation in relation to the Northern Ireland workforce as a whole.

Table 8.3 - Public authorities with an imbalanced workforce

Protestant-dominated		
Prot %	no	employment
>90%	7	15,871
80-89.9%	12	11,432
75-79.9%	6	15,511
<10 Catholics	7	399
Total	32	43,213

Catholic-dominated		
Catholic %	no	employment
>90%	1	310
>60%	6	8,459
>50%	8	12,301
Total	15	21,070

Source: FEC Monitoring Returns for 1991

Location

The relation between location and religious composition is similar to that in the private sector. The civil service and 'other' authorities are based in Belfast, while district councils and the health and education boards are located in the areas which they serve. Virtually all Catholic-majority authorities are in predominantly Catholic areas, whereas the reverse is not true for Protestant-dominated authorities. Of the seven employing less than 10 Catholics, only Carrickfergus Borough Council is outside Belfast. The rest are much smaller, but nevertheless display substantial underrepresentation in relation to the Belfast workforce. The seven authorities with more than 90% Protestant employment

include the RUC and the Ministry of Defence which together employ 14,379. The rest are all district councils. The 12 with over 80% Protestants include the Northern Ireland Police Authority which employs 3,177, 89.3% of which are Protestant; five district councils, and six 'others' based in Belfast, including Northern Ireland Electricity, and the Milk Marketing Board.

The most Catholic authority is Newry and Mourne District Council. Of those with less than 50% Protestants, only two (Enterprise Ulster, and City Bus) are based outside predominantly Catholic areas.

Senior Staff

A separate survey of senior public sector staff (excluding 'uniformed organisations') revealed that the Catholic proportion is much lower than for public sector employment as a whole, which the FEC found a matter of concern. None of this information is broken down by sex.

All sections showed an imbalance, but in the highest band, this ranged from a Protestant proportion of 70.0% in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to 87.3% in 'Other Specified Authorities'. The Protestant percentage in the Civil Service, at 84.5%, was among the highest.

Table 8.4 - Religious composition of senior public sector staff, 1990

	Protestant		Catholic		Total
	empl	%	empl	%	
Band 1 (>35,000)	772	79.5	199	20.5	1,198
Band 2 (25-35,000)	1,658	79.8	420	20.2	2,356
Band 3 (16-25,000)	3,849	73.3	1,400	26.7	5,646

source: FEC, 1991b, pp 7-9

Appointees

All authorities employing over 25 people were required to submit information about applicants and appointees.

Table 8.5 - Religion and sex of applicants and appointees, 1991 (%)

	applicants		appointees		diff
	p	c	p	c	in prop
male	59.8	40.2	60.6	39.4	0.8
female	59.2	40.8	59.1	40.9	-0.1
total	59.5	40.5	59.7	40.3	0.2

Source: FEC Summary of monitoring returns for 1991, pp 66-67

The Catholic proportion of female appointees was the same as their share in the public sector workforce, but substantially higher for men. Catholic men were rather less likely to be appointed than Protestant applicants, (and Catholic women slightly more so). The difference in overall success rate was so small as to be statistically insignificant. But, as in the private sector, the proportion of Catholics was not evenly distributed among authorities, and in some cases appointees increased religious imbalance. The most Catholic-dominated authority, Newry and Mourne almost doubled its Protestant ratio, while of those with less than 40% Protestants, three reduced their Protestant percentage, two increased it and for the other the figures were not given due to the confidentiality rule. For those with between 40% and 50% Catholics, three increased their Catholic percentage, and three reduced it. A similar picture is revealed at the other end of the scale. Of the seven most Protestant-dominated authorities, the Protestant proportion of appointees was higher than in the workforce as a whole in two, including the Ministry of Defence. In none were they less than 83% Protestant. Of those between 80% and 90% Protestant, nine reduced their Protestant ratio, and only two increased it. But in only two of the former were appointees less than 70% Protestant, and in three less than 80%.

Health Service Employment

The health boards employ a total of 48,351 people, of whom 79.8% are women. Catholics are better represented than they are both in the workforce as a whole, and in the public sector workforce. The proportion of Catholics is virtually the same for men (44.4%) and women (44.3%), which means Catholic men are relatively better represented in this sector.

Table 8.6 shows the usual pyramid structure, with women predominating at the bottom, and men at the top. Women are concentrated more than men, with 80.0% in three occupational groups, and 93.3% in four. Only 58.1% of men are in three groups, and 71.8% in four. But Catholic men are more concentrated than Protestants: 63.2% are in three occupations, and 76.3% in four. The tendency of Catholic men to predominate in the 'female' occupations is also striking, with Catholics outnumbering Protestants in SOC 3 (which includes nursing) and in SOC6 (personal and protective). Catholic men are underrepresented in management and professional occupations (SOCs 1 and 2) and in SOC5 (skilled manual).

The distribution of women's employment between religious groups is more even, but Catholics are underrepresented in management and clerical, and overrepresented in associate professional and technical. A distortion exists in professional occupations, in which 22.1% of men and 14.8% of women are 'non determined' compared with 10.4% and 9.8% for the workforce as a whole. This includes the substantial number from outside Northern Ireland, since the market for these occupations is international.

Table 8.6 - Composition of Health Board Employment by Occupation (%)

	Male		Female		Total	Total
	P	C	P	C	male	female
SOC1: Managers, administrators	69.6 [6.7]	30.4 [3.7]	67.2 [1.4]	32.8 [0.9]	504	446
SOC2: Professional Occupations	65.3 [19.8]	34.7 [13.1]	58.4 [5.0]	41.6 [4.4]	1,885	1,932
SOC3: Associate Professional, tech	46.7 [16.6]	53.3 [23.7]	52.4 [40.2]	47.6 [46.0]	1,885	16,865
SOC4: Clerical, secretarial	55.0 [9.0]	45.0 [9.2]	64.2 [17.8]	35.8 [12.5]	860	5,712
SOC5: Craft, skilled manual	70.8 [12.1]	29.2 [6.3]	70.1 [0.5]	29.9 [0.3]	876	153
SOC6: Personal, Protective	47.6 [17.2]	52.4 [23.8]	55.9 [21.9]	44.1 [21.7]	1,900	8,322
SOC7: Sales	87.5 [0.3]	12.5 [0.05]	65.4 [0.08]	34.6 [0.06]	17	27
SOC8: Plant, machine Operatives	61.4 [5.6]	38.6 [4.4]	85.7 [0.03]	14.3 [0.01]	487	8
SOC9: Other	50.2 [12.6]	49.8 [15.7]	53.8 [13.1]	46.2 [14.2]	1,333	5,139

Note: The first set of figures are for Protestant or Catholic as a percentage of those for whom a religion was determined. Figures in [] brackets are for the proportion of each group in that occupation.
Source: FEC, Summary of 1991 monitoring returns, pp 54-5

Senior Staff

The Protestant proportion of senior staff in the Health Boards is lower than in the public sector as a whole, particularly in lower grades. The staff structure is skewed in the health service: they make up well over half of total public sector staff in the top earnings band, but only minor proportions at the lower grades. In this top band, underrepresentation of Catholics is close to the public sector average. It is considerably less in the lower bands, but the numbers in these bands are very low in the health boards.

Table 8.7 - Religious composition of senior health service staff, 1990

	Health Boards			Public sector	
	empl	% of public sector	Prot %	empl	Prot %
Band 1 (>35,000)	445	57.6	77.5	772	79.5
Band 2 (25-35,000)	76	4.6	65.5	1,658	79.8
Band 3 (16-25,000)	231	6.0	67.9	3,849	73.3

source: FEC, 1992, pp 7-9

The Eastern Health and Social Security Board

The Eastern Board includes Belfast and the predominantly Protestant surrounding areas. The Board produces its own Equal Opportunities report covering the nine units under its management, including the Royal, plus its Belfast headquarters. There is a considerable difference in the religious composition of the units, although the gender composition is similar. The report provides only limited information, since the data is broken down either by gender or 'community background' but not both. It is not possible to ascertain for example how many Catholic women are employed. The occupational breakdown is given only for the Eastern Board as a whole, and not for individual units.

The percentage of Catholics ranges from 12% [13.5%] in the Ulster North Down and Ards Unit to 69% [75%] at the Mater Infirmorium, the maternity hospital which until

recently was run by the Catholic Church. The composition of units outside Belfast reflect the varying compositions of the population. What is more interesting is the way in which the Belfast units reflect the much more locally based territorial divisions

There is a difference of over 20% in the Catholic proportion of the workforce between the Royal and City, two general hospitals less than a mile from each other. The Mater for obvious reasons has a high Catholic percentage while the difference in the Community units are larger than for the hospitals. The Royal has the highest Catholic workforce, and is by far the largest employer of Catholics in Belfast.

Table 8.8 - Religious Composition of Belfast Hospitals/units. 1991

Unit/headquarters	Protestant	Catholic	Not Known/ Outside NI	Total
Headquarters	1,113 (58) [67]	548 (28) [33]	257 (10)	1,918
Belfast City	1 2,095 (58) [65.3]	1,113 (31) [34.7]	303 (11)	3,611
Royal Group	2,236 (39) [42.4]	3,042 (52) [57.6]	536(10)	5,814
Mater	176 (23) [25.0]	528 (69) [75.0]	62 (8)	766
S & E Belfast Com	3,155 (66) [74.6]	1,075 (22) 25.4]	568 (12)	4,798
N & W Belfast Com	1,500 (43) [48.4]	1,602 (46) 51.6]	395 (11)	3,497
Total	10,275 (50) [56.5]	7,908 (39) [43.5]	2,221 (11)	20,404

Note: figures in () brackets are for each group as a percentage of total. Figures in [] brackets are for Protestant or Catholic as percentage of those for whom a religion was determined.

Source: EHSS Equal Opportunities Report for 1991, p3

The occupational breakdown used in the Eastern Board's report differs from the SOC classification used by the FEC, and reflects the major occupations in hospitals. Table 8.9 shows some specialisations along religious lines: maintenance is predominantly Protestant, as is medical and dental; Catholics are overrepresented in nursing, Protestants in professional and technical grades.

The occupational groupings are not hierarchical as is the SOC classification. The inclusion of admin and clerical in one grade blurs the distinction in the SOC between management and clerical. Table 8.6 showed that the former was Protestant dominated, while Catholics are overrepresented in the latter in the Health Boards. The breakdown of staff by management level shows similar proportions of Catholics at senior

management level as in the Health Boards as a whole, with Senior Management 22% [26%] Catholic.

Table 8.9 - Employment in Eastern Health and Social Services Board by occupational group and religion

Staff Category	Protestant Staff		Catholic Staff	
	%	% in occ	%	% in occ
Admin & Clerical	62	13.2	38	12.1
Maintenance	73	2.0	27	1.1
Ancillary & General	60	35.0	40	35.0
Nursing	56	31.7	44	38.4
Social Services	60	5.1	40	5.2
Professional & Technical	71	7.9	29	5.0
Medical and Dental	73	4.4	27	2.5
Ambulance	61	0.8	39	0.7
TOTAL	60	100.0	40	100.0

Source: Eastern Board Equal Opportunities report for 1991, p 3

The length of service of staff shows a discontinuity around 20 years' service. The group employed for between 15 and 19 years is 43% Catholic: the next group, employed for 20-24 years, is only 35% Catholic. This suggests a marked increase in Catholic employment in the early 1970s, which is associated with an increase in health service employment generally and an increase in territorial segregation (see below).

Gender

The female percentage in the Board's employment is 82%. All units except headquarters employ more than 80% women, with 94% in North Down and Ards Community. The Royal's proportion is the same as the average. The headquarters, where senior managers are based, is only 43% female. Women do not predominate at all levels: there are no women in maintenance, and very few in the ambulance service. Women are also under-represented in the most high status occupation, medical and dental. A more detailed breakdown of the workforce at the Royal shows gender specialisations within these broad categories (see below). Women are more concentrated than men, with three quarters in two groups, and 87% in three. Only 43.8% of men are in two groups, and 57.7% in three. Nursing, the most numerous occupation for women, is the third for men, after the higher status medical and dental. But the most numerous male occupation is the low status ancillary staff.

Table 8.10 - Employment in Eastern Health and Social Services Board by gender and occupational group

Staff Category	Female Staff		Male Staff	
	%	% in occ	%	% in occ
Admin & Clerical	85	12.0	15	11.1
Maintenance	0	0.0	100	8.8
Ancillary & General	87	36.0	13	28.2
Nursing	93	39.0	7	13.9
Social Services	77	5.0	23	6.8
Professional & Technical	69	6.0	31	11.7
Medical and Dental	30	2.0	70	15.6
Ambulance	10	0.1	90	3.9
TOTAL	82	100.0	18	100.0

Source: ibid, p6

There is a general tendency for the most 'Catholic' occupations within the health service to be the most female dominated (Table 8.11). Nursing is the most female and the most Catholic; ancillary is in second place in both. Maintenance and medical and dental are the least Catholic and most male dominated: the former a Protestant 'labour aristocracy' occupation; the latter a high status Protestant male white collar occupation. Gender composition of occupations varies more than religious composition, but religious differences are considerable.

Table 8.11 - Religious and Gender Composition of Eastern Board Staff by occupational group

Staff Category	Female %	Catholic %
Admin & Clerical	85	38
Maintenance	0	27
Ancillary & General	87	40
Nursing	93	44
Social Services	77	40
Professional & Technical	69	29
Medical and Dental	30	27
TOTAL	83	40

Note: Catholic percentages is for the total excluding 'not known' and those born outside Northern Ireland
Source: ibid

The Royal Victoria Hospital

The development of the RVH

The Royal Group of Hospitals comprises four hospitals[3] on a single site, in Grosvenor Road in the Lower Falls area of West Belfast. Together they make up the largest of the Belfast hospital groups, employing nearly 5,000 people. As a general hospital, the Royal

serves the local community, but its catchment area takes in the whole of Northern Ireland for its 32 regional specialisations, in some of which it has a world wide reputation.

The first hospital on the site was the District Lunatic Asylum. Built in 1829, it was known as the *Belfast District Hospital for the Insane Poor*. The patients were transferred at the beginning of this century to Purdysburn, outside Belfast, which remains a hospital for the mentally ill. The old asylum building was demolished in the 1920s. By this time some of the hospitals had been built which were to come together as the Royal Group under the NHS.

Hospitals in the nineteenth century developed as private nursing homes, or charitable institutions. The Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, which became part of the Royal Group, was established in 1873 following a meeting of business and professional men. In the words of its proposer, the object was

> *"To provide medical treatment and medicines for the sick children of the poor; To diffuse among the poorer classes a knowledge of the proper management of young children in health and during sickness and to promote the advance of medical science with reference to the diseases of infancy and childhood" (Cited in McAteer, p 40).*

The area, then as now was largely populated by Catholics, and one of the poorest in the city. Formal health care was unobtainable for the majority, who depended on the women of the family and the local 'handywoman' (NUPE, 1992 p 45) to nurse the sick.

Development of the hospitals continued throughout the first half of the century, and the number of inpatients doubled between 1903 and 1942 (McAteer, p 37). But until the National Health Service, admissions other than emergencies were controlled by a Committee of the Board of Management who interviewed each potential patient. Only those who paid the Working People Subscription were admitted automatically. In 1938 a private wing was opened, but beds were restricted to those with an annual income less than £600 to make them available to

> *"those who could scarcely afford nursing home fees but who did not wish to be the recipients of charity" (cited in ibid, p 38)*

The Stormont government took little initiative to develop health care. There was no Minister for Health: health matters were dealt with by the local government ministry

"where ratepayers' considerations were paramount" (NUPE, 1992, p 42). The only major change was the conversion of workhouse infirmaries to District Hospitals in 1921 (ibid). Under Stormont, Northern Ireland continued to have the poorest health within the United Kingdom.

The major expansion of health care came with the development of the National Health Service in 1947 under the post-war British Labour government (see Chapter Four). The NHS was by no means universally welcomed in Northern Ireland. The Unionist MPs at Westminster voted against it, and the Catholic Church denounced it. The Irish News, which has a mainly Catholic readership, condemned what it called 'Dependence Day':

> *"Those opposing the social measures introduced today may be denounced as cranks and faddists.... it should again be noted that one hospital in this area, the Mater, have refused to be controlled by the state...Only by such a stand in the face of blandishments and enticements, can the state, greedy for power, be kept at bay" (cited in McAteer, p 39).*

To the Church, state funded health care represented a threat to its authority and control over the Catholic family. It opposed (as in the South) public provision which it saw as undermining the responsibility of the Christian family. But in Northern Ireland they were not able to halt the development of the public health service, or maintain their control over it as they did in education.

In the 45 years of the National Health Service, attitudes in Northern Ireland have changed. There is now almost universal support for the NHS, and for public expenditure in general. Whereas Unionists were at one with the Catholic hierarchy in denouncing public provision in the 1940s, they now echo the views of local trade unionists in opposing cuts in services. This is not due merely to an ideological shift, but reflects the loss of their traditional economic strongholds. As the industrial base has declined, the health service has become increasingly important in providing employment. Furthermore, the arrangements under which 'parity' of provision was established through general UK taxation meant that Stormont could preside over increased spending without having to increase taxes. Under Direct Rule, local politicians no longer have any direct control over the level of service.

With the establishment of the NHS, a Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority took control of most hospitals. The individual hospitals on the Grosvenor Road site were amalgamated to become the Royal Victoria Group. The Board under Stormont was Unionist-controlled, and management was firmly in Protestant hands. The Health

Service was reorganised after Direct Rule in the 1970s. Four area boards were made responsible not only for health but for personal social services, which in Britain is under local authority control. Board members included a minority of elected representatives "to eliminate the political bias of which previous hospital management committees had been accused" (Gaffikin & Morrissey, p187). Technocracy was to replace Unionist control.

Spending on health increased faster than in Britain, to considerably above the British average. In 1986-7 for example spending per capita in Northern Ireland was £386.61, compared to £233.15 in the North of England, while the number of full time health service staff per 1,000 of the population was 40% greater than the next highest region (ibid p189). Health improved with increased spending: infant mortality, which was 127% of the UK average in 1971 at the beginning of Direct Rule, fell to 117.8% by 1981, and to just above the average at 101.6 in 1990. Similar changes occurred with stillbirths and perinatal mortality, in which Northern Ireland moved from having the highest rates in the UK in 1971 to below the average in 1990 (Regional Trends, 1992).

The health service has become one of the largest employers in Northern Ireland, and increased employment opportunities for Catholics, particularly women. Its importance has redoubled with the decline of manufacturing employment. This is felt in acute form in West Belfast, where the old linen mills have long since shut down, and almost no sizeable employers exist within the area. Ford, the only large manufacturing plant, provides work almost exclusively for men.

On the Jarman Index[4] of Social Deprivation, Belfast is the most socially deprived region within the Eastern Health Board (EHSS, 1991b). Within Belfast, poverty is concentrated in North and West Belfast (EHSS, 1988). Poverty brings poor diet and poor health. The Board's own figures show that the incidence of gastro enteritis in children under 2 years - always associated with poverty - is concentrated in the North and West of the city (p14), and the take-up of immunisation programmes is lowest in these areas (p12). West Belfast has the highest infant mortality rate in Northern Ireland: it was still 11.9 per 1,000 in 1988 (Rolston & Tomlinson, p44) compared to a Northern Ireland average of 8.6 per thousand in the Eastern Board as a whole (EHSS 1991b, p 5).

Thatcherism started to affect health provision in the 1980s, and the steady improvement relative to Britain, has gone into reverse. Political support for the health service is so strong in both Britain and Northern Ireland that the New Right has not been able to attack it directly. Whereas hostility to other public services and to public sector staff (particularly teachers) has been unrelenting, the governments of Thatcher and Major have reiterated their commitment to the NHS. But their policies have gradually undermined the principle of universal access to free health care based on need.[5]

This has taken three major forms in relation to hospitals, implemented in three overlapping phases: firstly restrictions on funding which began in the early 1980s; secondly, privatisation and compulsory competitive tendering in the mid-1980s; lastly the 'internal market' under the 1989 NHS Act. This established the separation of 'provider' (hospitals, GPs etc) from 'purchasers' (the Health Authorities) creating the system of health care contracts and budgetary control which has led to a rationing of hospital services on grounds of cost. It also allowed hospitals to seek Trust Status, in other words to *Opt Out* of Health Authority control and become independently managed units.

The first developments in Northern Ireland were in the Health Strategic Plan for 1983-8 which budgeted for an increase of only 1% in real terms, half of which was to be made through greater efficiency. The second five year plan was announced in 1987. This reversed the relatively favourable position of Northern Ireland, and planned a spending increase over the period of 5% compared to 6.4% in Britain (Gaffikin & Morrissey p 195). The level of inflation exceeded the predictions on which these plans were based, with the result that severe cuts in services were threatened. A public campaign led to extra money being transferred into the health service (ibid p 196). Spending per head has increased slightly relative to the UK since then. By 1990/1 it was 122.4% of the UK average, which was little different from the level it had reached in 1982/3 of 123.3% (Regional Trends).

The private market has not developed as fast as it has in Britain, but there are now two private hospitals. Private nursing homes for the elderly have 'mushroomed' with two large employers in the field, Crestacare, an Isle of Man consortium and Sandown, a local group, which employs more than 1,000 people. These have resisted recognition of either trade unions or the RCN.[6]

Compulsory Competitive tendering has mainly affected manual occupations, such as domestic staff. This has led to job losses and erosion of conditions for the lowest paid workers. Although most contracts have been awarded 'in house', the exercise has been used to reduce the wages bill for manual workers.

All units in the Eastern Board have applied for Trust Status. As in Britain, there has been opposition from trade unions, professional bodies and the local community. But unlike Britain, the politicians themselves have been united in opposing the changes. Their opposition is in contrast to their power, however. While in Britain the Health Service 'reforms' have led to a dismantling of local accountability, in Northern Ireland this has been exacerbated by the lack of any effective local representative democracy.

Direct Rule replaced an elected dictatorship with a technocratic dictatorship, with minimal local accountability. Increasingly that structure has been geared towards managerial aims, based on the criteria of the market place. The Health Minister described the role of health boards in combining representative and managerial roles as "mission impossible" (Gaffikin & Morrissey, p 197). The representative role has been abandoned in favour of the managerial. There are now no representatives of locally elected councils, or of professional or trade union bodies. The monitoring bodies, the District Committees, have been abolished, and no equivalent to Community Health Councils exist. The chair of the Eastern Board was himself a casualty of managerialism: his appointment was not renewed by the Minister after he objected publicly to cuts in funding (ibid, p 196).

Industrial Relations at the Royal

The Royal Hospital has often been at the centre of opposition to these changes. Not all the struggles are simply about 'trade union issues'. The history of relations between Unions, the Eastern Health Board and the hospital management has been marked by disputes which have developed at times into major confrontations.

The unions have a reputation for militancy, and for resistance to government policies. In the West Belfast situation, this has sometimes brought them into direct conflict with state power in the form of the Army. As the chair of the joint shop steward committee put it

"The Eastern Health and Social Services Board and the government .... if they are talking to the American delegation we are Marxist revolutionaries and if they are talking to other delegations they have branded us as Provos" (West Belfast Economic Forum, 1990, p16).

The Eastern Board has a history of poor relations with trade unions in various units (LRA, 1986, pp7-8), but these disputes have become much more serious at the Royal. The longest period of industrial action came in 1986, when the Board imposed budget cuts without consulting the unions. Of the £5 million proposed cuts, £1 million were to come from the Royal, of which more than half came from ancillary staff[7]. As the official report into the strike put it

"This put the tasks being attempted by management firmly into the area of industrial relations most likely to produce a robust reaction." (LRA, p11).

The strike was precipitated by a cut in drivers' overtime, and dragged on for eight weeks. As the NUPE regional organiser put it to me, the strike was about more than this: it was about "the right to be heard". The unions viewed the outcome of the strike as a success: the workers won reinstatement on their previous conditions. It was followed by an official inquiry into the causes of the dispute, the Wood Committee.[8] The Committee's report expressed some dismay at the complexity of the trade union structure at the Royal:

"Local machinery is not so clear, either at Board or Unit level. Nor indeed are the exact sphere of influence of the individual unions....particular departments have similar workers in different trade unions. No doubt there are historical reasons for this, no doubt the situation works reasonably well with good co-operation and shared representation. It is something, however, which could be difficult at times for the employer." (LRA, 1986, p6).

A total of 38 trade union or professional associations are represented. The great majority of staff are in one of these, and some professional staff and nurses are members both of a professional body and a trade union. Eleven trade unions are members of the Health Services Committee of the ICTU

There is considerable friction between unions, and between unions and professional bodies. Splits have occurred with members of one union joining others, and the lack of clearly defined constituencies for each union inevitably creates rivalry over recruitment. The exact number in any one union/association is in some doubt, and the unions themselves are able only to make rough estimates of their membership. The following

figures are based on figures given by trade union officers and the hospital's personnel department, not all of which coincided.

The largest trade union is the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) with approximately 1300 members which recruits almost entirely among manual staff, and has a largely female membership. The second is the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE), with approximately 800 members, divided between nurses (300); ancillary (300); Professional and Technical (P & T), and Administrative and Clerical (A & C) (200). The Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance (NIPSA) claims 300 members at the Royal, mainly among A & C staff. This union, unlike the British equivalent NALGO, is the main union for civil servants as well as local government and public sector workers. Professional workers are mainly in Manufacturing, Scientific and Finance (MSF). The other major trade union is the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers (ATGWU), the Irish branch of the British TGWU. Membership of this union has fluctuated after a split from NUPE five years ago, but is now relatively small. Most qualified nurses are in the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) which is not TUC-affiliated, and is not part of the trade unions' joint negotiating machinery at the hospital. There is particular rivalry between the RCN and COHSE which recruits mainly unqualified nurses.

The most militant of the unions is NUPE, or as management sees it, the other unions are "more reasonable to deal with".[9] The union has been prominent in pushing for gender and religious equality. This is partly a reflection of its membership, mainly low-paid staff and predominantly Catholic women. It also reflects the union's leadership at regional level, which is almost entirely female, and has very close relations with its members (see also Cockburn, 1991). The leading officers have been prominent in the EOCNI and the Regional Officer is one of the signatories of the MacBride principles. NIPSA has also played a significant role on these issues, and claims to have driven the NICS towards adopting its equal opportunities policy. The union was one of the first to adopt a formal policy against sectarianism, in 1977.[10]

The Wood Committee made a series of recommendations for improved consultation with staff (LRA, pp16-20), which the unions feel were not implemented seriously by management. Relations again deteriorated in 1988, when the Board launched a 'Complementarity Study' as part of its financial planning for 1989-90 with the aim of investigating areas of overlap between services at the City, Royal and the Mater Hospitals,

"to address how resources can be released from acute hospital services on a recurring basis" (EHSS, 1988b, p1)

The study recommended combining the management structures of the three hospitals and bringing the sites geographically closer. It also proposed merging several services, including Accident and Emergency. The proposals were withdrawn after a public campaign, and alternative studies by the unions and local community groups. But resources continued to be reduced.

The Board's own figures show a fall of £5,117,000 in revenue allocation to Hospital Specialist and Related Services between 1988/9 and 1990/91, a drop of 1.65% (EHSS, 1991b, p 44). According to its draft application for Trust Status, the Royal Group lost over £6 million in revenue allocation in the seven years from 1984/5 to 1990/1 (Royal Group, 1991, p6).

Many of the cuts have been in the ancillary staff budget, which was facilitated through the compulsory competitive tendering exercise. In-house tenders reduced hours worked by domestics by 4,000, but the number of posts was kept constant as full-time staff were replaced with part-time and temporary workers. Management are pleased with the results of this exercise which has cleared out "old customs and practices",[11] while the unions, not unnaturally see it differently: one shop steward described privatisation as having "crucified the women".[12].

Essential maintenance and repairs have been neglected, and a backlog has accumulated. A report in the late 1980s suggested that a minimum of £20 million was needed to achieve "basic standards of health and safety" (NUPE, 1991 p6).[13] At the beginning of 1992, management was ordered by the Eastern Board to save £650,000. This led to the closure of over 100 beds, and the cutting of gynaecological operations by 50% and children's operations by 75% (Irish News, 2.4.1992).

This drain of finance is a major reason given by the hospital management for its application for Trust Status, which was made in 1990.[14] While the unions share the criticisms of the Eastern Board, they do not support Trust Status, and have campaigned against it. Health services unions have objected on principle to Trust Status, which "introduces the concept of market forces into the arena of health care and endorses the profit principle" (NUPE, 1991 p8). A similar view was voiced by the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in its response to the application.

"One of our major concerns is that the high priority given to the financial viability of Trust units will in practice conflict with the aim of providing good quality clinical and personal care. A rapid through-put of patients and an increase in day-surgery will become more important than decisions based on medical and social considerations (SDLP 1991, p3).

NUPE's response also criticise the lack of consultation and high quality information; the failure to develop a coherent business plan. It is concerned at the lack of commitment in the application to all existing services, and the lack of commitment from the Minister on funding.

The Trust application commits management to maintaining terms and conditions at least as favourable as those which are nationally negotiated. But they are determined to exclude trade unions as they develop new working practices. According to the personnel director, "we have not said we would agree to negotiate with trade unions on terms and conditions, but only to consult."[15] Flexibility is seen as a major advantage of Trust Status by management, but for the trade unions,

"Reward, flexibility and skill mix are all words synonymous with reduced hours, reduced jobs and greater workload for less income" (NUPE, p11).

One aspect which particularly angers the unions is the Shadow Trust team appointed to manage the transition to trust status. It consists mainly of businessmen with little connection with the area or with the health service. The two 'community representatives' are a nun from outside the area, and a former mayor of Belfast, Unionist City Councillor John Carson. Business representation includes a manager of the United States company BIS Beecom, but there is no trade union representation.

The Board opposed the Trust application, and final approval has been deferred. The hospital has been a 'Shadow Trust' since April 1992 and will become a full Trust in April 1993. It is perhaps significant that every unit within the Eastern Board, including personal social services which is not covered by Trust Status in Britain, has expressed interest in Opting Out. This contrasts with only two units in the Southern Board, and none in the Northern or Western by March 1992.

On the eve of the Shadow Trust taking over, the Eastern Board decided at a secret meeting to establish what it called a 'supervisory committee' to monitor the running of RVH. It announced that the Royal Group would have to save £3 million over the next financial year (Irish News, 2.4.1992). The unions see this "extraordinary coup" as a

being undertaken because the present management had not made "sufficient cuts to satisfy the Board" (ibid) and feared that the Board planned to strip the hospital of assets during the year up to Trust Status.[16]

With the election of the Conservative government for a fourth term, the transition to Trust Status is assured. The three-way dispute which has accompanied the development of the Trust, and the cuts in resources make it certain that its birth will be extremely painful.

Employment at the Royal

The Royal is the largest employer in the Eastern Board. In March 1991 it had 5726 staff 1991, 18% of the Board total (EHSS 1991b, p43). The Board's Equal Opportunities report gives the slightly higher figure of 5,814 staff for January 1991, of whom 52% [58%] were Catholic, and 82% women. I have obtained detailed figures for the gender breakdown of the hospital's staff for 1992 by occupational group, but no comparable figures are available on religion. It is however possible to make some estimate of the proportions in the various categories on the information available.

Table 8.13 - RVH Staff, 1991-1992

Grade	1992 FTEs	1991 Nos	1991 FTEs	change 1991-2 FTEs	change 1991-2 %
Admin & Clerical	756.43	757	689.67	66.76	9.68
Maintenance	95.00	120	120.00	- 25.0	-20.83
Ancillary & General	1,076.44	1,473	1,164.67	- 88.23	- 7.58
Nursing	2,067.42	2,661	2,239.13	-171.71	- 7.67
Student	415.06	556	556.00	-140.94	-25.35
Trained/other	1,652.36	2,105	1,683.13	-30.77	- 1.83
Professional & Tech	577.29	512	480.50	96.79	20.14
Medical and Dent	197.64	197	149.98	47.66	31.78
Other	2.57	6	3.47	- 0.9	-25.94
TOTAL	4,772.79	5,726	4,847.42	-74.63	- 1.54

Source: RVH personnel dept, unpublished figures; EHSS, Statistics for 1991,p 43

Table 8.13 shows changes over the period leading up to the Shadow Trust. The categories used in the reports are somewhat different which could account for some of the discrepancies in individual grades. There has clearly been an increase in administrative staff, and a decrease in maintenance and ancillary. In 1991, over half of the Board's medical staff were listed as headquarters staff, so the increase in this group

at the Royal could represent a transfer from the Eastern Board. The number of student nurses declined by over 25% over the year, while a freeze on vacancies meant that nurses who qualified during the year were not able to obtain posts.

Gender and employment

The proportion of female staff at the Royal was 77.6% in terms of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) in April 1992, according to the hospital's own personnel department. Women were 82% of total staff in 1991 (EHSS 1991a). This discrepancy reflects the large number of part-time women workers in certain grades.

Table 8.14 - Female % of Eastern Board & RVH Staff by occupational group

Staff Category	RVH (FTE) 1992	RVH Staff 1991	EHSS Staff 1991
Admin & Clerical	80.67	84	
Maintenance	0.0	0	
Ancillary & General	61.98	87	
Nursing	95.35	93	
Social Services	n/a	77	
Professional & Technical	64.65	69	
Medical and Dental	41.51	30	
TOTAL	77.66	82	83

Source: FTEs from unpublished figures from RVH management; staff figures from EHSS Equal Opportunities Report, 1991

Table 8.15 gives the gender breakdown for the Royal by occupational group in greater detail. The structure is extremely complex and hierarchical, with many different grades in each occupational group. For example, there are fifty different categories of ancillary and general, which have been combined in the tables below into seven broad groupings.

This detailed breakdown shows a more segregated workforce than indicated by the broad groups in published data, with a more distinct gender hierarchy. For example when the administrative grade is divided between management and clerical occupations, it is clear that women predominate in clerical occupations, while management is almost 50% female. One clerical grade, personal secretary, employing 29.5% of clerical staff, is 100% female. The proportion of women in the other clerical grades is inversely

related to seniority, with no women in the most senior grade, and less than 50% in the next.

Over half (55.13%) of ancillary staff are in grades in which staff are either 90% male or 90% female. Professional staff as a whole are over 90% female, while the technical staff group, though more evenly balanced, contains five all-male and nine all-female grades. Nursing is overwhelmingly female, with the majority of occupational groups, including every midwife grade, all-female. Men do not predominate in the top grades here: the largest male groups are nursing auxiliaries and student nurses.

Table 8.15 - RVH Staff by gender and occupational group (FTE)

Grade	Female	Male	Total	Female %
Admin & Clerical	610.19	146.24	756.43	80.67
Management	17.00	15.00	32.00	53.13
Clerical	593.19	131.24	724.43	81.88
Maintenance	0.00	95.00	95.00	0.00
Ancillary & General	667.15	409.29	1,076.44	61.98
Catering	110.94	60.57	171.51	64.68
Domestic	315.52	54.24	369.76	85.33
Orderly	222.69	26.48	249.17	89.37
Porter/ Security	3.00	223.00	226.00	1.33
Telephonist	15.00	2.00	17.00	88.24
Outdoor workers	0.00	36.00	36.00	0.00
Misc	0.00	7.00	7.00	0.00
Nursing	1,971.34	96.08	2,067.42	95.35
Other	2.57	0.00	2.57	100.00
Professional & Tech	373.23	204.06	577.29	64.65
Technical	198.12	143.55	341.67	57.99
Professional	160.03	16.50	176.53	90.65
Works Officer	0.00	17.00	17.00	0.00
Scientist	13.08	22.01	35.09	37.28
Misc	2.00	5.00	7.00	28.57
Medical and Dental	82.04	115.60	197.64	41.51
TOTAL	3,706.52	1,066.27	4,772.79	77.66

Source: RVH management, unpublished figures

Flexible working

The extent of part-time working can be estimated by comparing FTE figures with staff numbers (Table 8.16). This shows that maintenance and student nursing are full-time occupations. Maintenance is all male, while student nursing, which is female-dominated,

is almost by definition full-time. There is considerable part-time working in ancillary, nursing, medical, and in the small group of 'other occupations', with rather less in clerical and professional and technical. Part-time working prevails where the workforce is predominantly female. The large amount of part-time work in medical occupations appears an exception, but more probably results from doctors working in a number of hospitals.

Table 8.16 - RVH Staff, 1991 by occupational group

Grade	1992		1991		
	FTE	% female	(a)nos	(b)FTE	b as % of a
Admin & Clerical	756.43	80.67	757	689.67	91.11
Maintenance	95.00	0.00	120	120.00	100.00
Ancillary	1,076.44	61.98	1,473	1,164.67	79.07
Nursing	2,067.42	95.35	2,661	2,239.13	84.15
Student	415.06	92.29	556	556.00	100.00
Trained/other	1,652.36	96.12	2,105	1,683.13	79.96
Professional & Tech	577.29	64.65	512	480.50	93.85
Medical and Dental	197.64	41.51	197	149.98	76.13
Other	2.57	100.00	6	3.47	57.83
TOTAL	4,772.79	77.66	5,726.00	4,847.42	84.66

Source: 1992 figures, RVH personnel, unpublished figures; 1991 figures, EHSS Statistics for 1991, p 43

This reflects the way in which flexible working is structured differently for men and women, and is tied to the notion of male breadwinner and female dependent. For women, flexibility means part-time working and this has been increased with compulsory competitive tendering (CCT). For men, flexible hours tend to be achieved by overtime, which is not available in female occupations. Male cooks for example, with a working week of 39 hours, regularly work 65 hours a week, and porters seven days a week.[17]

Different forms of flexibility also appear in relation to sickness cover. Female domestics cover for each other when one of their colleagues is sick, increasing their own work load. Porters on the other hand have one-to-one sickness cover, with a porter on leave brought in on overtime rates when someone is sick. There is scope for considerable abuse of this system, and it has caused friction between staff and between different trade unions.[18]

Female dominated occupations were the first to be affected by Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). Management claims that staff are better off with the enhanced flexibility, and that all domestic staff are now on a 10% bonus.[19] For the unions, CCT

represented an attack on basic conditions of work whose main purpose was cuts. They claim that low paid workers have borne the brunt of the cuts in the staffing budget. However, management plans to carry out the exercise in male occupations, such as transport, security, portering.

New forms of flexible working are being developed for nursing. A debate was launched in 1991 with a paper on *Reprofiling* by Roger Dyson, a former government adviser. His "philosophy of change" aimed to improve benefits to staff and the quantity and quality of patient care by attacking the "mind-set" that believed these were mutually exclusive (Dyson, 1991, p2). The way forward, he argues is to increase the *skillmix* to allow less skilled workers to work with a smaller number of highly skilled/paid staff, and thus reduce total cost. He claims that

> *"a higher quality of planned nursing care for patients which carries with it some increase in the proportion of nursing time away from direct bedside contact. This can only be made possible buy changes in staffing ratios which would allow direct bedside contact to be maintained by other staff" (ibid, p4)*

This approach is combined with personal contracts, to be signed on an annual basis, which allows workers the opportunity to opt out of a standard contract

> *"based on the concept of a working week or a working month, the origin of which lies in the needs of male manual workers in the 19th Century (ibid p7)*

In the guise of 'personal freedom' and an attack of male-oriented working practices, this paper proposes a casualisation of the workforce, and a break with collectively agreed working conditions.

The skill-mix approach has been enthusiastically embraced by management at the Royal. Reprofiling has not yet been introduced into Northern Ireland, but the Royal is developing proposals, under a 'forward looking' nurse manager. Management intends to upgrade nursing auxiliaries to health care assistants, who will be able to take on nursing tasks such as taking temperatures, and free nurses' time, although it acknowledges that the RCN, which represents qualified nurses, "fights tooth and nail to stop it".[20]

The RCN has criticised the principle of the exercise, arguing that the continuous presence of skilled staff is necessary to maintain quality of care (see for example

Buchan & Ball, 1991). COHSE, which recruits mainly unqualified nurses, recognises potential benefits to its members from upgrading unqualified staff. They see RCN's position as reflecting the interests of the high grade staff, and limiting the responsibility allowed to their own members.[21] Both oppose casualisation of working conditions, which COHSE condemned as a plan for "two tier staffing in a two tier service".[22]

The Equal Value Case

Northern Ireland's most protracted Equal Value case concerns five women domestic staff at the Royal (see Chapter Five). The case began in 1986 and was precipitated when a new grading structure was introduced which collapsed grades 1 to 3 into one. Women were able to earn only 10 pence an hour extra after two years. The women claim their work is of equal value to two male comparators, a porter and groundsman on grade 4.

I interviewed the main claimant, Rosaleen Davidson, a NUPE shop steward. She is a part-time cleaner, working four hours a day in the early evening. She is able to work part-time because her husband is in full-time work. The majority of her colleagues have husbands who are either in full-time work or are retired or on invalidity pension. She says that women have had to leave if their husbands become unemployed because of the loss of benefit. No figures are available to confirm this, but it conforms to the points made by McWilliams (1991), and information from the EOCNI survey of Working Lives (see Chapter Six).

Rosaleen estimates that well over 90% of domestics are Catholic women, although the majority were Protestant up to the 1970s. Protestant women didn't want to work in the area when 'the Troubles' started. Most domestics live within walking distance of the hospital. They are therefore committed to the hospital both as workers and potential users. While this is a traditionally female occupation, some young men have started work recently, due to the lack of work locally.

Domestic work (cleaning) is traditionally seen as one of the lowest level occupations. In the same way as women are assumed by employers in the clothing industry to be able to sew (see Chapter Two), domestic work is seen as unskilled work which women are 'naturally' able to do. There has been no formal training in the hospital, with new staff trained by colleagues on the job.

Management is defending the equal value case, which was described as a 'shambles'. The problem lies, in this view, not in the undervaluation of the women's work, but in the overvaluing of the porters. Porters should have been on Grade 3, but were given the extra grade as a result of a political decision to avoid trouble.[23]

But for the claimants, the case has been extremely important in allowing the women "value themselves and their work". It has raised the importance of domestic work and the maintenance of hygiene standards to patient care. As Rosaleen put it elsewhere

> *"Many years ago, people didn't understand how essential hygiene was for good health care. Today everyone knows its importance, but the authorities aren't prepared to pay for it. Our hospital is dirty." (NUPE, p112)*

She was critical of the CCT exercise, not only because cuts were built into the specification, but because she felt that the domestic manager who wrote it did not understand the nature of the tasks. The exclusion of supervisors from the exercise showed "they were held in contempt by management", and they are now more inclined to see their interests in common with the domestics.

In making the claim, the women have been supported not only by their male comparators, but more generally by workers in the hospital and in the community. The case has won widespread publicity, and Rosaleen herself has featured in a television documentary contrasting working practices in Northern Ireland with Scandinavia (to the disadvantage of the former, needless to say). Local people (men and women) are "delighted" at the publicity over the case.

The union is seen very much as a supportive network, both within the hospital and through the full-time officers. The education programme the union provides has given its members confidence in themselves and allowed them to develop wider involvement in the union and the community. Since women have taken on the job of shop steward, there is now 100% trade union membership among domestics.

Another development has been the women's committee's *Oral Health and History Project*, initiated as part of the education programme. It culminated in the publication this year of *Women's Voices* (NUPE, 1992), which was launched both in Belfast and in the House of Commons. One of its five main authors was another of the domestics involved in the Equal Value case, Mary Ferris, and another was a school meals worker

Anna McGonigle, who has since become National President of the Union. The book celebrates the work of women,

> *"the story of the invisible. It is the story of women who have struggled in the shadows that we may come into the light" (NUPE, p7)*

Whatever the final outcome of the equal value case it has clearly helped to open up new perspectives for the women involved, which has allowed them to take pride in the work and in themselves as women workers. Rosaleen described in the book how the experience had

> *"increased my respect for my fellow workers. Ward-maids weren't expected to have values or opinions. They were just supposed to be work horses. They weren't seen or appreciated...after seven years the female domestics are still fighting to be recognised as having equal value (NUPE p112).*

The work on the book has also started to raise issues such as sexuality and contraception, which have been taboo for Northern Ireland women. Although it is cautious about abortion, on which the group "felt no more comfortable with it than most others" they have been forced to confront accepted attitudes, and conclude

> *"the realisation that there had been no new evaluation of a law which ruled the lives of women more than 100 years ago and continues to do so, leaves us disturbed. When the life-threatening alternatives presented to our great-grandmothers are still amongst those sought out by women today, then condemnation is neither appropriate nor relevant" (NUPE p111).*

A group of NUPE members, most of them from the hospital ran a seminar on the project at a women's history conference which I attended. The discussion ranged over a series of personal issues connected with health, which inevitably included sexuality, and although many in the group were complete strangers to each other, it was free and comfortable, and above all funny.

There are other cases concerning sex discrimination within the hospital: of a total of 12 new cases against the Eastern Board during 1990, three were at the Royal (EHSS, 1991a, p 33).

None of these concern sexual harassment. This issue does not appear to be seen as a serious problem by management or unions. Two cases were mentioned to me. One concerned a security guard who attacked a woman. He denied it and was not

disciplined, while the woman was transferred. The evidence that she had brought him back a present from her holiday was deemed sufficient to support his claim that she had led him on. In another case a domestic in catering 'flashed' at a nurse. Although he was disciplined, he was not transferred, while she was told to use another canteen.

The woman who told me about these cases was angry about the treatment, particularly of the first woman. But she said that "most women here wouldn't let it happen", an attitude echoed by a male trade unionist, who said that the women "could take care of themselves".

Equal Opportunities Policies

The Eastern Board established its equal opportunities unit in 1989 following the fair employment legislation. The Royal has no equal opportunities officer, but the training unit has run a series of seminars for managers on equal opportunities during 1992 (Royal Group, 1991b, p 45). The draft Trust application contained a short section committing it to

> *"provide equal opportunity regardless of religious affiliation, sex, race or disability" and to "build on the excellent progress already made in the area of equal opportunities to encourage flexible working, job sharing, career breaks, paternity leave, back to work training programmes and other related activities" (Royal Group, 1991, p61)*

The personnel manager feels they have done "quite a bit for women". But the beneficiaries of flexibility have tended to be the higher paid, who can afford career breaks. The lower paid women feel that management policies have created flexibility at their expense and not in their interests.

The hospital has a "handful" of people involved in job shares. Personnel does not appear enthusiastic about this. I was told that "people worry about their other half 'skiving'", a concern not generally found with job-shares. This probably reflects a lack of commitment to the scheme, and preference for part-time working.

The RVH has one of only two workplace nurseries in Belfast, for which all employees are eligible. It is open five days a week to cover a standard working day (8.15am -5.20pm) and has 50 places. The hospital provides premises, and maintenance free, but

does not subsidise fees. I was told that under Trust Status more help might be given, but the nursery itself is already budgeting for an expected loss of subsidy.

Although by British standards the fees are reasonable (£235 per month full time inclusive food and equipment), it is out of range of the majority of women workers, especially part-timers. It is mainly used by doctors, nurses and technical staff, and a few clerical staff.[24] Again it is the relatively advantaged on the staff who benefit. The chair of the shop stewards committee claimed the cost means it is "used by hierarchy, not working class women".

Religion and Employment

Religious composition is more difficult than gender to ascertain, and the subject is treated as much more sensitive. The Board's own 'confidential' fair employment figures are of limited use since they do not show the religious composition of employment by sex or occupation for individual units. The concentration on global figures for religious composition in effect disguises as much as it reveals. The board's claim of a balanced workforce (EHSS, 1991a, p16) is hard to justify based on the total figures.

Just over half of employees at the hospital in 1991 were avowedly Catholic, or 58% of those for whom a religion was determined (ibid, p3). The distribution of Catholics between occupational groups within the Eastern Board as a whole showed that Catholics were underrepresented in maintenance, professional and technical and in medical. The Board comments that this tends

> *"to reflect the trend within society in Northern Ireland - a strong emphasis within the Protestant community in science and engineering and a corresponding emphasis within the Roman Catholic community in the "caring services" such as nursing and community work" (ibid, p 3)*

This 'emphasis' appears to be taken as a fixed characteristic requiring no further investigation. The fact that the highest status caring profession, medicine, is predominantly Protestant is not commented on. There is no evidence in the report of any recognition of the need, let alone a strategy, to break down occupational stereotyping.

The proportion of Catholics at the Royal is much higher than the Eastern Board average of 35% [39.6]. This reflects Catholic predominance in the local area. Residential segregation has increased since the start of the 'Troubles', and people are less willing to travel to work across 'hostile territory'. This particularly affects ancillary staff and other low-paid workers, who are more likely to be female, to work part-time, and not have access to a car. Most are able to walk to work through their own neighbourhood. These groups are therefore overwhelmingly Catholic at the Royal. Higher paid staff are more likely to travel to work from outside the area, and the majority are Protestant.

This pattern is confirmed by the Board's analysis of its recruitment catchment area for specific grades. It analysed applications for 92 posts across all its hospitals to establish the location of applicants (Table 8.17). Both ancillary and maintenance staff are mainly locally recruited, while 50% or less of applicants to other grades live locally.

Table 8.17 - Proportion of job applicants living inside local council area (Eastern Board, 1991)

Grade	% in local council area	no of applicants	no of posts
Admin & clerical	50	924	24
maintenance	78	79	2
ancillary & general	74	710	22
Nursing	34	588	18
Social Services	48	132	7
Prof & tech	36	297	13
Medical & dental	10	197	6

Source: Eastern Board Equal Opportunities Report for 1991, p 19

Two of the posts examined in detail were at the Royal, a part-time domestic assistant, and a student dental assistant. There were 97 applications for the domestic vacancy, of which 77% came from West Belfast, 5% from South and North Belfast, and 17% from Lisburn to the South West. Only 4% of applicants were Protestant with 84% Catholic and 12% 'not known'. None came from East Belfast. It appears that people were more willing to travel in from outside the city than from Protestant areas of Belfast. The fact that 76 people from West Belfast applied for a temporary part-time domestic post demonstrates the desperate shortage of jobs in the area. The dental assistant vacancy attracted 25 applicants, 45% Protestant, 45% Catholic and 10% 'not known'. Only 20% came from West Belfast, and 20% from other Belfast wards.

This analysis suggests that overrepresentation of Catholics at the Royal is largely accounted for by their numbers in ancillary grades. Domestic and allied staff make up

25% of the total at the Royal (EHSS, 1991b, p43). On the assumption that these are 90% Catholic, the proportion of Catholics in other occupations falls to 42.5%, not much higher than the average for the Board as a whole. The religious composition in higher status occupations, where the majority of applicants live outside the local area, is likely to reflect more closely the general distribution within the board area.

The hierarchy of gender is therefore replicated in the religious composition of the hospital staff, with the most Catholic occupations those with lowest status. Nevertheless, the past twenty years have seen significant improvements in Catholic representation in other occupations. While it may be an exaggeration to say that "20 years ago no Catholic was employed above a domestic"[25] there has been an increase in Catholics among clerical and professional and technical occupations as the health service has expanded, while Catholics have gained increased opportunities in the traditional Catholic occupation of nursing.

There have also been some changes at the top. This has taken place particularly over the past three years, since the new fair employment legislation required the Board to monitor its workforce. The Eastern Board now has a Catholic General Manager, and the senior management at the Royal includes at least one Catholic.

> *"Catholics have been 'fast-tracked' by the government for top jobs in order to improve the Board's image while working class Catholic women are suffering from government policies"*[26]

The recruitment and promotion procedures adopted by the Board and the Royal in response to fair employment guidelines should eliminate direct discrimination. Vacancies are widely advertised in media sources read by both communities. Nevertheless there were thirteen new complaints of discrimination to the Fair Employment Tribunal (FET) on religious or political grounds in 1990, of which four were at the Royal (EHSS 1991a, p 29), and the finding by the FET of unlawful discrimination against the Board in the Purdysburn case (see p) "highlighted failings in the operation of the selection procedures" (NIPSA, 1991, p132).

The Board's Equal Opportunities Report comments that the total of appointees reflects the overall workforce, and beyond noting that there are compositional variations across each unit, makes no mention of the different success rates. But Catholics have a lower success rate than Protestants in general, and the difference is much greater at the Royal, with the Catholic proportion of appointees over 10% less than their proportion

of applicants. It is possible that this reflects the large numbers of Catholic applications for individual posts due to the high unemployment in the area. But the figures suggest at the very least a trend that requires further investigation.

Table 8.18 - Applicants and Appointees, 1991 (%)

	Protestant			Catholic		
	appli-cants	appoi-ntees	success rate	appli-cants	appoi ntees	success rate
Royal	34.5	45.2	19.0	65.5	54.8	12.1
EHSS Board	56.0	59.5	12.0	44.0	40.5	10.4

Source: EHSS Equal Opportunities Report for 1991, p12

The report devotes considerable attention to the establishment of the relevant 'community labour availability' and to the sources by which applicants became aware of vacancies. But beyond this, the section on 'the way forward' contains very little on plans for positive action on fair employment. NIPSA singles out the Eastern Board for criticism, describing a

> *"lack of pro-active and coordinated approach to the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace" (NIPSA, 1991, p 132)*

The perception is widespread that the Royal has been singled out for unfavourable treatment, and that part of the problem is its largely Catholic workforce, and the nationalist community it serves. As one union officer put it, "if they could put wheels on the hospital and take it somewhere else they would".[27] But while religious divisions pervades every aspect of working life in the hospital, the subject is also one which everyone tries to avoid.

Trade Unions and sectarianism

The official trade union movement has found it extremely difficult to confront the issue of sectarianism. Unions, particularly those in the public sector, have moved on from the position when to raise the question of discrimination was automatically dismissed as sectarian (Rolston, 1981). Opposition to sectarianism and support for fair employment

became official policy of all public sector unions and the Northern Committee of the ICTU during the 1980s.

But fear of dividing the membership by raising the issue still dominates trade union activity, including those at the Royal. One branch secretary told me she "can't raise issue of discrimination at branch meetings" because it is "too sensitive". Protestant members would "think I was raising it because I'm a Catholic and it would tear the branch apart." [28]

The extent of the difference goes much deeper, since religion determines a whole series of political and social ideas. The attitudes of the two communities to the state reflects a basic division over national identity. The Northern Ireland Attitudes Survey found more polarised national identities since the Troubles

Table 8.19 - Religion and national identity (%)

	Protestant		Catholic	
	1968	1989	1968	1989
British	39	68	20	8
Irish	20	3	76	60
Ulster	32	10	5	2
Northern Irish	--	16	--	25

Source: Northern Ireland Attitudes Survey, 1990-1, p25

Protestants have shifted towards a greater identification with Britain, with only a tiny proportion now identifying as Irish. A majority of Catholics identify as Irish, though the proportion is smaller than in 1968. The shift has not been towards British identity, but towards Northern Irish, with those identifying themselves as British falling to only 8%.[29]

This division is reflected in the attitudes of staff at the hospital as in every workplace in Northern Ireland. Whole areas of discussion which are part of normal trade union branch life elsewhere can be ruled out.

> *"Protestants reject anti-government statements, because they think I'm getting at 'their' government".*[30]

Most trade unionists still prefer to ignore religious divisions within their membership, and there is a general desire to act as if 'all that' was left outside. A constant theme reiterated here, as elsewhere, is that "we don't inquire into somebody's religion. We treat everybody the same". But this precludes any confrontation of the issue, or of

wider political debate. COHSE has four male regional officers, who according to one of them, "happen to be Catholics" but "we don't discuss politics".[31] When I asked about sectarianism, this official emphasised this even-handedness by giving the example of a case he had taken up of discrimination against a Protestant.

The issue is also one which the RCN would prefer to leave alone. There are "few case of religious problems" and the organisation "tries to remove religious bias in employment and care of patients".[32]

The NUPE members I spoke to seemed more comfortable with discussing sectarianism openly. Rosaleen, describing the situation among her own colleagues, said that you "can speak without denying your background". The union has raised the issue publicly.

> *"Discrimination has been 'invisible", and the union has 'named' the issue. We have had a lot of opposition from the TUC."*[33]

All the people I spoke to claimed there was no overt sectarianism among staff within the Royal. The hospital was portrayed as an island of non-sectarianism in which trade unionists could unite around trade union issues, and staff can get on with the job. The attempt to divorce trade union issues from the political situation has not been easy. Three members of staff have been murdered within the hospital itself in political/sectarian attacks. The unions organised a stoppage in protest, uniting both Protestant and Catholic workers. The organiser told me that the murders were carried out by "people from outside".[34]

The Troubles

The 'Troubles' inevitably impinge on working life in the hospital. Armed soldiers patrol the streets outside, while fortified police stations and army barracks tower over the tiny houses surrounding the hospital. The hospital regularly receives casualties from the violence both from the local area and the whole of Northern Ireland, since it has specialised units to deal with these injuries. The hospital is often full of friends and relatives of the injured. Soldiers have at times been stationed inside the hospital, both to guard patients and for surveillance.

The contradictions of attempting to separate trade union issues from political issues developed during the 1986 strike. According to NUPE's general secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe,

> *"the strikers, joined by 100 women workers, were confronted by a convoy of 17 police and military landrovers complete with personnel carrying machine guns. In another terrifying scene, the divisional Mobile Support Unit was drafted in".* [35]

The use of troops was also condemned by Peter Archer, Labour's Northern Ireland spokesperson in the House of Commons

> *"There can be no justification for the use of the army and police to deal with such a civil dispute...This goes beyond anything done in even the most bitter of the recent disputes in Britain"* [36]

The workers at the Royal were treated in Bickerstaffe's words "as enemies of the state". But he was careful to stress the separation of the economic battle from political:

> *"Such provocation and intimidation ...must be condemned by all who share civilised values, regardless of their views of the troubles in Northern Ireland. Ancillary workers at the Royal Victoria do not want to be dragged into a political battlefield."* [37]

It is significant that it was at the Royal, where the striking workforce was predominantly Catholic, that a successful protest was made against the use of the Army. For Protestant workers, the use of 'their' army raises contradictions between their position as Unionists and trade unionists. The unions have also been able to persuade management to stop the use of the hospital's canteen by soldiers. Dangerous political arguments were avoided by stressing the danger that the soldiers' presence represented to patients and staff, since they offered a potential target.[38]

A much earlier protest at the Royal was an unofficial strike in 1980 by NUPE members in protest at the army's use of the hospital roof for surveillance of the area. The officials who dominated NUPE's regional office at that time denounced the workers as motivated by 'sectarianism'. They did not use the same charge against the two NUPE branches who demanded the expulsion of the shop stewards who led the action (Rolston, 1981, p89).

Towards equality ?

The Royal presents a contradictory picture in relation to gender and religious subordination. On the one hand women and Catholics are gaining a foothold in senior management and in occupations from which they have traditionally been excluded, while the proportion of Catholics in the workforce as a whole is increasing. On the other hand the hierarchies of gender and religion remain, and have in some ways become more entrenched as the position of the least well paid has deteriorated.

Management can claim some success for their equal opportunities policies, while the unions claim that their workers' conditions have suffered. The difference reflects different notions of equality of opportunity which are the product of different philosophies.

The Board's statements stress the importance of equal opportunities within the "turbulent competitive world of the 1990s" and the need for a workforce which is "competent, committed and flexible" within the new framework of the internal market (EHSS, 1991a, p42). For unions, particularly those representing low paid workers, these policies of restructuring are harming the worst off, and destroying collectively agreed conditions on which their members depend. The main losers are women and Catholics.

The relative importance of gender or religious disadvantage varies according to grade. The technical side has only recently started to recruit Catholics, and a women technician told me she felt more discriminated against as a Catholic than as a woman. She is herself fighting a two year battle over regrading. The domestics on the lower grades are fighting their equal value case on the grounds of sex inequality, but the two hierarchies are clearly seen by their union as connected, not as separate.

The lowest paid jobs in British hospitals tend to be done by women from ethnic minorities, often those with insecure legal status which allows them to be doubly exploited. Northern Ireland does not have this pool of labour to drawn on, and Catholic women "do the 'skivvying' work" in the hospital.[39] While a minority of Catholics and women have been able to do well at the top, flexibility has been used against the low paid.

Notes to Chapter Eight

1. Unless otherwise stated, the religious percentages are of those for whom a religion was determined.

2. The approximate figure is derived from the figure of 55,317 for employment in education given in the Census of Production for 1989. From this are deducted the figures for employment in education and library boards (which excludes teachers in schools) and the two universities given in the Fair Employment monitoring report for 1991.

3. The Royal Victoria (General) Hospital; Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children; Royal Maternity; the Dental Hospital.

4. "The Jarman Index used eight variables to calculate levels of social deprivation - numbers of elderly living alone, children under five, unskilled workers, unemployed, single parents, overcrowding, moving house in the last year and ethnic minorities" (EHSS, 1991b, p 10).

5. The previous Labour government had already started on this road by introducing prescription charges.

6. Interviews with RCN and COHSE regional officials (30.3.92. and 27.3.92).

7. NUPE press release, 24th March 1988.

8. The members of the Committee were Professor John Wood; David Kenny; and Barbara Switzer of TASS (AUEW).

9. Interview with RVH personnel director, 2.4.92.

10. Interview with NIPSA regional official, 23.3.92.

11. Interview with RVH personnel director.

12. Interview with Chair of Shop Stewards Committee, RVH, 18.3.92.

13. Estimates of the current repairs backlog given by trade union officers varied from £33 million to £53 million.

14. This view was put to me by the RVH personnel director.

15. Interview with RVH personnel director

16. Interview with NUPE regional official, 1.4.92.

17. Interview with COHSE branch official, RVH, 30.3.92.

18. Some trade union officials claimed that this issue had been behind a split in which members of NUPE left the union to join the ATGWU.

19. Interview with RVH personnel director.

20. Interview with RVH personnel director.

21. COHSE research officer, 13.5.92.

22. COHSE press statement on Skill Mix, March, 1991

23. Interview with RVH personnel director.

24. Information supplied by nursery deputy manager.

25. Interview with NUPE regional official.

26. Interview with NUPE regional official.

27. Interview with COHSE branch officer.

28. Interview with COHSE branch officer.

29. National identity in Northern Ireland is more complicated than suggested by these figures. When asked to chose only one category, there may be a tendency to make a political statement, which does not reflect the complexity of national identity, and the way it changes in different contexts. For example people may identify themselves as British in a political sense, but in their day-to=day lives see themselves as Northern Irish, and even (for example in relation to some sports) as Irish.

30. Interview with COHSE branch officer.

31. Interview with COHSE regional official.

32. Interview with RCN regional official.

33. Interview with NUPE regional officer.

34. Interview with NUPE branch officer.

35. NUPE press release, 5th June, 1986.

36. House of Commons press release, 5th June, 1986.

37. NUPE press release, 5th June, 1986.

38. Interview with COHSE branch officer.

39. Interview with NUPE regional officer, 24.2.92.

Conclusions

This study has shown that there has been no simple relation between processes of modernisation and sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. These divisions have outlived both the traditional economic base on which Unionist hegemony was built, and the Stormont regime, and continue to dominate political, economic and social life. The political importance of the sectarian divide has overshadowed interest in gender inequality. But, as this work makes clear, gender has been a crucial element in the construction of sectarian divisions, while sectarianism has helped to sustain patriarchal structures. The labour market is structured by religion and by sex, and sectarianism has compounded gender disadvantage for Catholic women.

The proposition that modernisation - in the form of 'neutral' British state policy, and multinational capital - would overcome sectarian divisions suggests that capitalism and sectarianism are two mutually antagonist forces. This represents an ahistorical and abstract view of capital, which is echoed in the modernisation thesis in both its Marxist and conservative variants.

Capital accumulation takes place in concrete conditions, and must confront an existing set of social relations in which divisions based on gender and ethnicity intersect with those of class. Maintenance of the conditions for accumulation requires accommodation with existing structures of domination as well as confrontation with them. The relationship between capitalism and non-class divisions is therefore one of both contradiction and functionality. Modernisation will tend both to undermine and reconstitute existing inequalities.

In Northern Ireland class formation developed a sectarian character. This also had a specific gender dimension: Protestants were identified with maleness and Catholic with femaleness, both in the mythology of the two communities, and concretely in labour market specialisations.

Unionist hegemony was based on Protestant privilege in the workforce, which was entrenched under Stormont through Protestant control of the state. Penetration of multinational capital has not in itself brought about changes in employment practices. Multinational companies depend, as do all capitalist firm operating in Northern Ireland, on the cooperation of a workforce in which sectarian practices have been established. These companies are also dependent on the state both to provide the general conditions for profitable production, and to subsidise production. Multinationals did not initiate change in employment practices. Nevertheless, when pressures for action against discrimination developed, they were in a position to make changes more easily than domestic capital.

The expectation that British policy under direct rule would be able to overcome sectarianism suggests that British rule could operate independently of the dominant (Unionist) classes in Northern Ireland. To tackle the structures of sectarianism would be to undermine this class, and the basis of their own support in Ireland.

Official anti-discrimination policy has been slow and reluctant. The recent strengthening of Fair Employment legislation was brought about through pressure from the United States rather than a commitment to equality. At the same time, other government social and economic policies are exacerbating inequalities which in the Northern Ireland context inevitably reinforce divisions based on religion and gender.

Sectarianism and Employment

The past twenty years have seen substantial changes in the structure of the labour market. Increased state expenditure has brought expanded employment opportunities for Catholics, while the growth in private services has brought increasing numbers of women into the labour market. But the evidence discussed above suggests that inequalities based on gender and religion persist.

The unemployment differential between Protestants and Catholics has shown remarkable consistency, and is the most obvious indicator of disadvantage. While the range of occupations open to Catholics and to women has increased, occupational and industrial specialisation by religion and gender remains. The highest status occupations continue to be disproportionately the preserve of Protestant men, both manual (the

traditional 'labour aristocracy' in public and private sector) and non-manual (for example management, medicine). The identification of 'Catholic' occupations with 'women's' occupations is a reflection of the low status of both groups.

The FEC monitoring returns for individual private companies showed a high degree of workplace segregation. Almost 45% of the monitored workforce was in companies employing less than 20%, or fewer than 10 people, from the other religious group. These global figures disguise the true level of segregation: the example of Lee Apparel shows how an apparently balanced workforce may be made up of separate, religiously segregated, plants.

Catholics are better represented in the public sector. This reflects higher employment of Catholic women: Catholic men are substantially underrepresented, but the majority of this underrepresentation is due to Protestant domination of the security forces. The FEC monitoring returns are more aggregated than for the private sector and do not reveal the high level of segregation which exists in individual workplaces. The study of the Eastern Health Board and the RVH suggested that individual occupations and units remain highly specialised on religious and gender lines.

Multinationals

The patterns of employment in multinational companies have not been discernibly different from domestic firms. This suggests that they have tended to follow prevailing practices rather than to challenge them. The location of new industrial developments in predominantly Protestant areas has ensured that the workforce would be disproportionately Protestant. But many companies located in Belfast have also employed few Catholics, even in occupations where access to skills and experience were not important. Ford, a pioneer of MacBride-inspired employment practices in the late 1980s, was found guilty of discrimination in the early part of the decade.

British capital, which might also be assumed to be free of involvement with sectarian structures, displayed the same type of employment practices as domestic capital.

While multinational firms capital cannot be treated as the embodiment of 'pure' capital, indifferent to sectarian divisions, they nevertheless operate under different constraints and pressures from indigenous capital. It was pressure from their own shareholders,

rather than Fair Employment legislation, which forced US companies to change their practices.

These companies are in a better position to respond to this pressure than indigenous firms. They have access to greater resources (both capital and human) to develop new practices. United States companies in particular have experience of implementing effective equal opportunities policies on both race and gender.

It could be argued that the peripherality of many of the Northern Ireland plants, and their relatively short stay there, would make it not worth their while to attempt to change employment practices. But when these firms were under pressure from elsewhere to change, their relative autonomy from local structures becomes an advantage.

The Canadian company Bombardier has ploughed huge investment into its Northern Ireland operation, Short Brothers. Equal opportunities has been tied to changes in the labour process and the declining importance of traditional 'labour aristocracy' occupations. These changes have been forced quite explicitly by the desire to win US defence contracts, which were made conditional on changing employment composition. But the continuing overwhelming Protestant domination of the workforce at Short Brothers illustrates the structural obstacles to change. The company has so far failed to meet its advertised targets for Catholic recruitment.

Prospects

The Chair of the FEC recently described the Commission's 'nightmare scenario' as one where the religious imbalance in employment was made up of small discrepancies in a large number of firms; and that imbalance was concentrated in small firms. The first appears to be borne out; but underrepresentation of Catholics is lower, the smaller the company, and this makes rectifying the imbalance less problematic (CCRU, 1991, p49).

This optimism may be misplaced. Firstly, the figures on which he based the statement deal only with firms employing more than 25 people. Smaller companies are generally more tied into their local communities, depending on informal methods of recruitment, and more resistant to change. Secondly, overall figures can disguise grossly unbalanced workforces in individual firms. The segregation which the monitoring revealed in larger

companies is likely to be much greater in small companies. It should also be noted that while Catholics as a whole are underrepresented in large companies, this is due to a shortfall in Catholic males. There is a higher proportion of Catholic women in these firms than in smaller ones.

The language of equal opportunities has started to permeate the larger companies, particularly multinationals, as compulsory religious monitoring has forced them to examine the composition of their workforce.[1] But the decline in inward investment makes it unwise to pin hopes of transformation on this source.[2] The intensity of the religious divide makes it extremely unlikely that small companies would be able or willing to develop balanced workforces. An increase in the Catholic workforce is more likely through an expansion of Catholic owned firms, than from desegregating existing small companies.

The gloomy outlook for the economy and rising unemployment reduces the prospect of creating new companies, or new jobs, and therefore eliminating the unemployment differential. With low rates of labour turnover, even if fair employment practices are rigorously adhered to change is likely to be extremely slow (Gudgin & Murphy, 1991).

The public sector should offer greater prospects for change. Recruitment to the civil service is now 40% Catholic, although the proportion at the top remain low. There has been controversy over employment practices in local councils. A recent FEC report on Lisburn borough council showed a clear failure to afford fair employment (FEC, 1992).

The extension of the welfare state brought increased employment for Catholics, but the 'social apartheid' in social reproduction has served to entrench as well as undermine sectarian divisions. The security forces remain an area of Protestant privilege.

The study of the Royal Victoria Hospital showed the contradictory impact of government policy. The hospital saw an extension of employment for women and Catholics over the past 20 years, both in numbers and the range of occupations. But the workforce remains heavily structured by gender and religion. The 'fast-tracking' of fair employment in recent years has seen Catholics move into senior management. Equal opportunities policies have tended to favour those in higher status occupations, while those in low status occupations - disproportionately female and Catholic - have suffered most from the new 'flexibility'.

Cuts in government social spending and deregulation exacerbate differences. While equal opportunities policies have helped some at the top, they are tending to increase divisions at the bottom. The government's own senior officials recently leaked a report which argued that the Targeting Social Needs programme was seriously underfunded, while existing legislation could not be expected to change patterns of religious disadvantage within the next ten years.[3]

The workplace and traditional trade union activity provide only limited possibilities for tackling sectarianism. Segregation means there is no meeting place where workers can come together to discuss issues of common interest. The study of the RVH pointed to the limits which sectarianism places on trade union debate and activity. The fear of breaking a fragile unity does not merely place discussion of the politics of sectarianism out of bounds; it also makes problematic discussion of 'normal' trade union issues, such as cuts in government expenditure.

Gender and Sectarianism

The separation of concern with religion and gender in official data and academic inquiry has limited the available information on the interrelation between religion and gender. But the evidence presented above suggests the importance of these connections.

Catholic and Protestant women experience different relations to the labour market. Until the 1950s, the low wages and high unemployment of Catholic men meant that Catholic women were more likely than Protestant women to be in the labour force. Their privileged access to employment allowed Protestant men to earn a 'family wage' and kept Protestant women out of the formal labour force. But this situation has now been reversed. The extension of female employment has been greater among Protestants, particularly in part-time work.

One of the most striking figures emerging from official data was that less than half of Catholic men between the ages of 44 and 65 are in full-time work, and thus able to be 'bread-winners'. But this is not compensated by their wives' earnings. The benefit system assumes married women's dependence on the male wage, and restricts wives of unemployed men from entering the labour market. For Catholic women, sexual inequality is compounded by religious disadvantage.

Working women in Northern Ireland face more difficult conditions than in Britain, with the worst child-care in the EC. Flexible working practices to enable caring responsibilities to be combined with paid work are less widespread. The 'political vacuum'[4] created by direct rule deprives women of a focus for campaigning around workplace issues.

There has been little study of sectarian relations in the workplace. Those studies which have examined in detail workplace relations have concentrated on gender. The sensitivity of the religious question means that it is either ignored, or mentioned obliquely, as 'different cultural traditions'. But religious segregation at work divides women from each other, and does not provide the basis for unity on issues of common concern.

Women are also divided by the different traditions of the two communities. The ties of Protestantism to the ascendancy has meant that Protestant women have no tradition of struggle against oppression with which they can identify. Women in the South were able to link the struggle for the vote with the nationalist and socialist movements at the beginning of the century. Protestants were unable to make this connection, and were much less active in the suffrage movement. Gordon argues that a Protestant woman who fights for her own interests is still seen a rocking the boat. Women in the Protestant traditional are 'invisible':

> *"Historically and currently the bonding rituals of the ascendancy, like the Orange Order or the Masons have totally rejected and excluded women" (Gordon, 1990, p7).*

In Catholic mythology women are not invisible, but their image is bounded by the virgin/motherhood dichotomy. While Catholic women can identify with a history of struggle against oppression, it is also one in which the rights of women have rarely been prominent, and were often counterposed to the rights of the community. In the independence struggle, women were ultimately forced to sacrifice their interests to the national struggle (see Chapter Three). This helped to ensure that the regimes created at partition were built on extremely conservative attitudes to women.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s challenged the Unionist state, and ultimately led to the overthrow of Stormont, but it was within a framework which left the basis of the two communities intact. Women played a largely subordinate role. The increased

polarisation of the two communities with the 'Troubles' made common struggles for women's rights more difficult.

There have been some small signs recently of renewed activity by women, with the growth of community based women's projects, such as the Shankill Women's Centre, and the Falls Women's Centre. The equal value case of the women domestic workers at the RVH has also unleashed a new creativity and self-confidence among the women involved and their colleagues.

The women's movement has made a tentative start in discussing 'difference'. A conference in Belfast on 'Women in Ireland in the 1990s held workshops on both *Women, Protestantism and Unionism* and *Women, Republicanism and Catholicism*, which at least raised openly that "most taboo of subjects."[5] These signs of movement from avoidance towards "recognising the need to name those issues which divide us"[6] is hopeful. But whether women will be able to move on towards challenging the reactionary elements in these traditions together remains uncertain.

The State and Sectarianism

Since direct rule, the policy of successive British governments in relation to sectarianism has shifted as it has come up against contradictory pressures. It would be too simplistic to argue either that it has been straightforwardly reformist, or that it has single-mindedly aimed at shoring up sectarian divisions. The primary concern has been the maintenance of stability. This has meant that it has had to rely on the structures on which Unionist power was built, while at the same time avowedly aiming to dismantle sectarianism.

The 1976 Fair Employment Act was weak and ineffective. The Fair Employment Agency was hampered by lack of support - and sometimes obstruction - from the government whose policies it was supposed to carry out.

The 1989 Act was brought in following political pressure from the United States, and has been described as the minimum necessary to appease this pressure. The involvement of the FEC Chair in the campaign against MacBride reduced its credibility as a body independent of the government.

Equal opportunities legislation assumes a social consensus which does not exist in Northern Ireland. While the state professes neutrality, the security exemption from the Fair Employment Act emphasises the continuing identification of Catholics with disloyalty.

The extension of the welfare state widened the circle of Catholics who benefit directly from state spending. But the demands of the civil right movement for citizenship rights for Catholics could not be accommodated within the Stormont regime. The reforms carried out under direct rule have created a new Catholic middle class who have a more direct stake in the state apparatus itself. The civil service is no longer the exclusive preserve of the Protestant ascendancy. But the translation of this increased inclusion in employment into inclusive political structures remains unresolved.

While equal opportunities policies assume a neutral state, the repressive apparatus remains in the hands of one (Protestant) community. Furthermore, this apparatus is defending the boundaries of the Northern Ireland state. This boundary was established explicitly to create a Protestant state, and the character of that state has inevitably been defined by the territorial division.

The overthrow of the Stormont regime has not overcome the sectarian divide. The border remains the essential glue which sustains sectarian divisions. Attempts to build a working class unity which ignores the roots of these divisions have proven futile.

Notes to Chapter Nine

1. This was brought home to me during a discussion with the personnel manager of a large company. After a detailed outline of equal opportunities policies in his company, in which he expressed optimism about the changes of attitude he saw in relation to the employment of Catholics in employment, he told me that he had only ever worked with one Protestant with whom he could feel comfortable.

2. This is true, despite the recent announcement of £95 million new investment by an Indonesian manufacturer, which is hoped to create 900 new jobs over the new three years (Financial Times, 28th January, 1993).

3. *Ireland Agenda*, Number 8, January, 1993 (Labour Committee on Ireland, London).

4. Joanna McMinn, speaking at Conference on *Women in Ireland in the 1990s* organised by WEA Women's Studies Branch, 14th October, 1990. (Conference Report, 1991).

5. Report of Conference *Women in Ireland in the 1990s* organised by WEA Women Studies Branch, 14th October, 1990

6. ibid.

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